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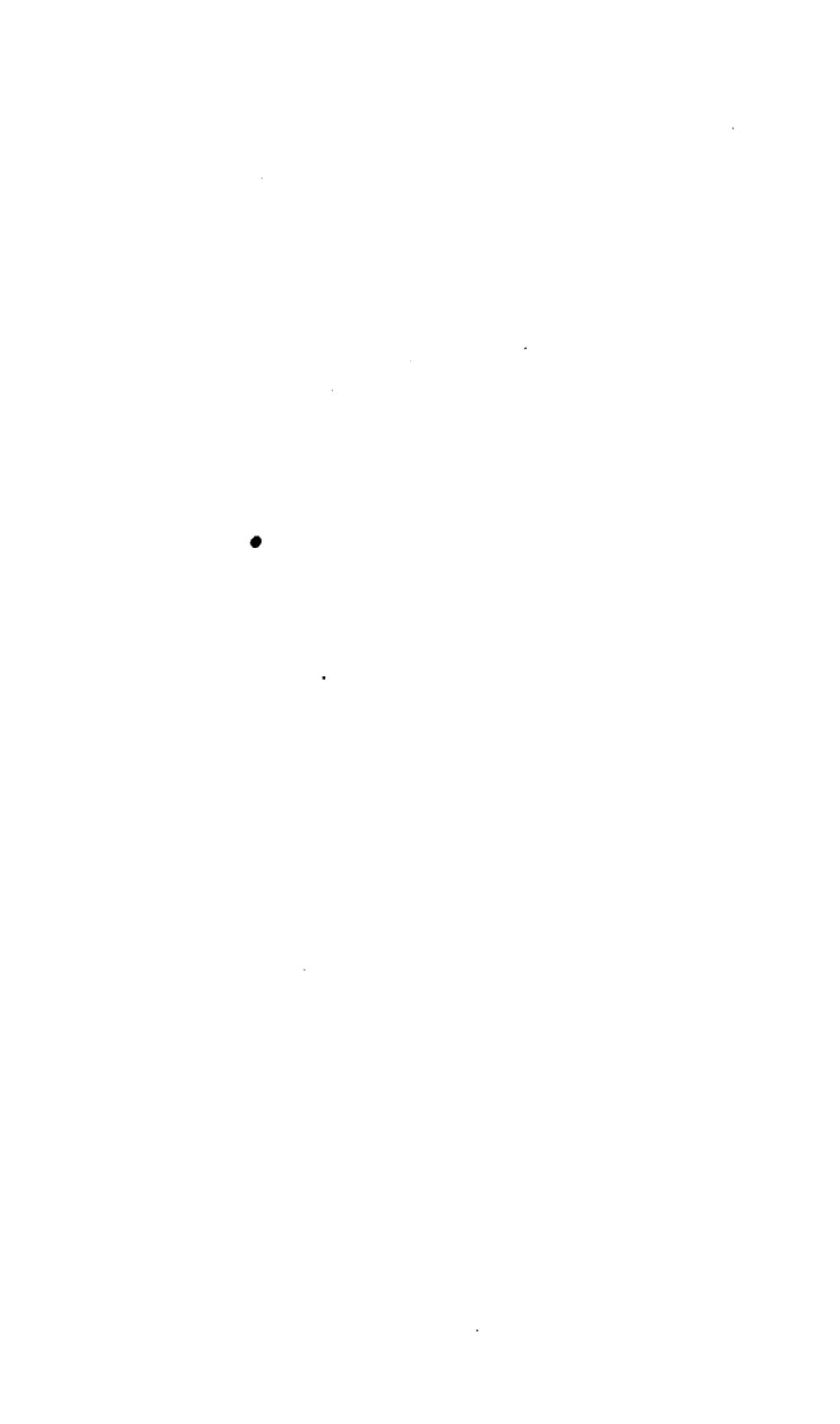


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THE
GEM OF THE MINES.

A Thrilling Narrative

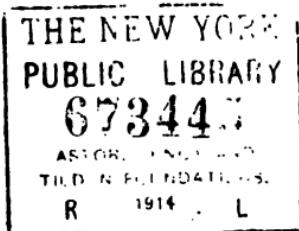
OF

CALIFORNIA LIFE.

COMPOSED OF SCENES AND INCIDENTS WHICH PASSED UNDER THE
IMMEDIATE OBSERVATION OF THE AUTHOR DURING
FIVE YEARS RESIDENCE IN THAT STATE
IN THE EARLY DAYS.

BY MRS. J. BLAKESLEE FROST.

HARTFORD, CONN.
PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHORESS.
1866.



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TO THE

Pioneers of California,

*Who with stout hearts and strong hands, through innumerable
sufferings and privations, have reared on that Western
Slope a State which is an honor to our great
nation and a bright star on the
American shield,*

This work is Respectfully

DEDICATED.

P R E F A C E .

IN presenting this little volume to the reading public, the Authoress begs leave to say, that she has endeavored through the medium of its pages to throw some light on California life in the early settlement of that region by Americans.

Being fully aware that hundreds and perhaps thousands of her readers have no adequate idea of the trials and privations which attended near and dear friends, who emigrated to that country in the "early days," she hopes this little work will be read with interest.

To the Authoress it possesses a peculiar value, as it brings vividly to her mind scenes and incidents which passed under her immediate observation, and for the truth of which she will vouch. Most of the names are assumed, but in a few instances, the real names of the parties are given, and there is no doubt some of the readers of this work will readily detect the part enacted by them in this thrilling drama.

If a recital of the sufferings and persecutions which attended our heroine, and through which she passed unscathed, will add one jewel to that crowning diadem of woman, Constancy, Virtue, and Affection, or assist in making life, with its sorrows and cares, more bearable to some of the weaker ones of our sex, our purpose will be accomplished.

J. B. F.

THE GEM OF THE MINES.

CHAPTER I.

“OH! I am going to California!” said the young and beautiful Agnes, as she entered her mother’s house, six months after her marriage with the wealthy and aristocratic Mr. Alling.

“You going to California? why, what do you mean, my child, by such strange talk?” said her mother, looking up with astonishment. “Do you really mean what you say, or are you only talking for talk’s sake, to see what effect it will have on me?”

“Oh, no indeed, mother! it is not vain talk; we are really going; we sail the day after to-morrow. Mr. Alling put me in the cars to come and see you to day, and he comes up to-morrow to get me and to say good-by to you, and the next day we set sail for the ‘golden shores of the Pacific,’ ” said Agnes, her eyes beaming with delight at the idea of behold-

ing for herself that far-famed land of golden sunset and twilight shadows ; the land of flowers, of romance, and beauty.

“ But,” continued Agnes, bursting into a joyous laugh, “ you don’t ask me to take off my things. I suppose I may as well help myself,” at the same time untying her bonnet, and laying aside her travelling cloak.

“ I supposed you were at home in your mother’s house, my child, though really I was so surprised at the sudden announcement of your leaving for California, that I thought of nothing else ; but tell me, Agnes, what has put this strange idea into your head ? Was it your husband’s notion or yours, to leave your poor old mother alone the few years or months that remain to her of this life, and go so many thousand miles away, and perhaps never return again ? Or if you should be spared to visit once more the old home of your childhood, it may be with a broken constitution, or shattered in mind and penniless. You know not the toils and privations you may have to endure in that distant land, away from home and friends ; ” and the old lady laid aside her spectacles and wiped away the tears, which, despite her efforts at calmness, stood glistening on her cheek.

“Oh come, come, mother ! don’t look so sad. Why, I should think you had just received the news of my sudden decease, and had no friends left to help you mourn for me,” said Agnes, with a forced laugh, vainly attempting to appear happy in her mother’s presence, though her heart was really sinking within her at the picture her mother had drawn of what might befall her, though such a thing had never before entered her girlish mind ; and she began to fear that the separation might tell unfavorably upon her mother in her advanced stage of life, and that in reality, she might be looking upon her for the last time. But feeling that much depended on her own calmness, she summoned all her fortitude to her aid, and continued :—

“Come, cheer up, mother, and I will tell you all about it. You know when I was on my bridal tour, during the time we spent at Saratoga, I became acquainted with a lady from California, who was on a visit to her native State, and was spending some time at the Springs with an invalid friend, that she might have the benefit of the cooling air and mineral waters, though I believe she returned again to California in a few weeks after we left. She told me so much about that beautiful country, and pictured

it to my imagination in such glowing colors, that I thought it must be a paradise on earth. She said that the moon shone brighter there than here ; that the stars seem nearer and twinkle faster ; that the skies are more blue, and streams more clear ; that the mountains were lofty and grand ; that the scenery was beautiful, wild, and romantic, and over the earth was spread a magnificent carpet of the richest flowers, filling the air with their fragrance for miles around ; and, mother, ever since that time, I have felt that I must visit that flowery land despite the consequences.”

“ But what did she say of the people in that country ? ” asked her mother.

“ Oh, she said they were very kind and hospitable, always ready to assist the needy, and that there was an attachment existing between Californians which is never manifested by any other class of people. Why, mother, they are Americans the same as ourselves,” said Agnes, with a smile and a sideway glance at her mother, from under her arched eyebrows.

“ Yes, but circumstances alter cases, my child ; and remember it is not all ‘ gold that glitters.’ ”

“ I am well aware of that fact,” said Agnes, sig-

nificantly ; " but if I had the eloquence of that lady, or if she was here for one hour, I think you would have the ' California fever ' as well as myself ; and the desire to see that country might overcome all your scruples, and you would be induced to cross the two oceans, even at this time of life."

" It might be so," said her mother, thoughtfully, " if I were thirty years younger, but as it is I am too old. But I thought you were happy enough in your new home, Agnes, without wishing to leave it."

" I am happy there," replied Agnes, " but, but —"

" But what, my child ? "

" But ' circumstances alter cases,' as you say ; and this marrying for dollars and cents is not always just the thing ; " and pausing a moment she continued, — " Mr. Alling has some business which calls him to San Francisco, and as I have so often expressed a desire to go there, he has made arrangements to that effect. After attending to his business on his arrival, which will occupy but a short time, we will make the tour of the State, visiting all the places of interest, and then return home, and we promise to spend Christmas with you, twelve months from this time. And then I shall bring home so

many little curiosities and nice presents to you ! and you know, mother, if we are all well, a year will go by so soon, that you will only begin to miss me when I shall return."

Leaving Agnes and her mother to their own reflections, and quiet conversation, if our reader will go with us we will give him a view of her home in her childhood's happy days, and a brief history of her life up to the time of the opening of our story.

Col. Eaton, the father of Agnes, at the time of her birth was very poor, living in a small cottage in a quiet manufacturing village in the heart of Connecticut, and for several years was subject to all the inconveniences which poverty brings in its train; but finally, after much hard study and perseverance, he brought to perfection, and procured a patent on a valuable invention, for which he obtained a sum sufficient not only to place him above want, but to make him independent for life. He selected the most beautiful spot in that little town and built a house after a modern and highly approved plan, and furnished it with taste and elegance, and there he sat himself down to enjoy the fruits of his labors, and spend the declining years of his life in peace and quiet. In his younger days, Colonel Eaton had been, if not ele-

gant, at least finely proportioned and genteel ; but time and hard labor had made their inroads upon his face and figure, and sprinkled his head with silvery locks. Notwithstanding the toils and privations through which he had passed in this life, he maintained the lively and happy disposition with which his Creator had endowed him. He had not allowed his temper to become soured by contact with disappointment and poverty ; he was generous even to a fault, a warm and devoted friend, but a dreaded and revengeful enemy. Agnes was the last but one of a family of seven children, four daughters and three sons, and the pet and idol of her father, and up to the age of twelve years was almost his precise image ; but after she overstepped the line which divides the child from the woman, she developed a rare genius seldom if ever excelled. Unaccustomed to the gay and giddy whirl of fashionable life, a stranger to the silly, deceitful tales of love which are so often poured into the ears of the young and innocent, reared among her native hills, free as the air of heaven, she roamed the forest at will, gathering flowers and studying the great book of nature ; or, seated upon a rock by a small stream which flowed through the woodlands a short distance from her

home, she would listen for hours to the music of the gurgling brook as it leaped down each gentle declivity in its course onward to the river. This, to her, was heaven.

In many respects she possessed her father's disposition ; the lion and the lamb met in two great extremes, at times a wild, romping, self-willed, giddy girl, and at others a meek, confiding innocent child full of sympathy and affection, a strange combination of character from which might be moulded almost any being that fancy or principle might dictate. In person she was not strikingly beautiful. At the age of fifteen she was rather taller than most girls of her age, and well developed, black wavy hair, large dark eyes, that were, in reality, the index of her soul, melting into tenderness, or flashing with all the fire of passion and contempt as circumstances occurred to call forth her pity or displeasure, her eyes told the tale of sympathy or anger before the words could be uttered ; her features were small and regular with a complexion where the rose and the lily contended for the mastery. She was petted and idolized by her parents, and left to follow the bent of her own inclinations ; nothing was neglected in her education that money could procure, and her

every wish was gratified almost before it was expressed. At the age of eighteen we find her not the silly, thoughtless, school-girl of later years, a slave to fashion reclining on softly cushioned sofas, reading the last novel, or discussing the merits and demerits of some popular opera singer, or indulging in unkind criticisms on some young artiste who had studied hard to contribute to her amusement at the theatre, but on the contrary a gifted woman, possessing rare talents, and a brilliant intellect. She moved about with the air of a queen, yet so unassuming and natural in all her manners, that she was admired, envied, and yet beloved by all. She selected for her most intimate friends, girls honest and true in the humbler walks of life ; 'twas all the same to her, she had her father's generous disposition, ambitious, independent, and brave. But, alas ! poor girl, the scale is turned ; reverses came ; her father fell in a fit of apoplexy from which he only recovered with a shattered mind, just trembling on the edge of reason, and after a few months, another shock, and then another, and all that was left of Col. Eaton was laid in the grave.

Poor Agnes, how little was she prepared for such a blow ; but nerving herself as much as possible, she

tried to speak words of consolation to her sorrowing mother, and when she could say no more she turned and wiped away the tears that hung like diamonds on her long lashes. Owing to the prostration of Col. Eaton's mental faculties by the first shock, he was unable to give any information concerning the state of his affairs, the extent of his indebtedness, or the amount of his property, which after being in the hands of administrators for a long time, was finally settled, leaving but a small portion for the widow and her children. They were obliged to give up their beautiful house, furniture, horses, and carriages, and all that they could once call their own was sold under the hammer to the highest bidder, reserving only the poor little cottage house which was the birth-place of Agnes some eighteen years before, which was fast going to decay, and there they moved, the mother and children as their future home with no means for their subsistence, and no dependence but their hands. Many were the pretended friends who offered to help them, but were told by Agnes in her usual kind and winning way, that they were not so poor as to need assistance, and when they did, she would promptly let them know it, — though at the same time she knew they had no means of helping them, and only offered to do so to

initiate themselves into her good graces, thinking that in her adverse circumstances she might favor their suit, but intimidated by her mild rebuke they had not the courage to repeat the visit.

Agnes saw the immediate necessity for action ; her mother was too infirm to work ; the sun of seventy summers had shone on her with its uncertain rays, now bright and joyous, and again through the dark cloud of adversity on her in her poverty and despair. And now she had almost filled up the days of the years allotted to mankind, threescore and ten, and although having had a good constitution, was ill prepared for sudden reverses or trouble in whatever form it might come ; the whole weight seemed to fall upon Agnes. Her married brother had all he could do to look after the affairs of his own family ; and her younger sister could assist but very little, as it was necessary for her to remain at home with her mother. An elder brother had died about a year previous to the death of her father, leaving a widow and one child in New York city in moderate circumstances,—a very estimable lady, and with her Agnes conferred as to the best course to pursue, who after cool deliberation, advised her to come to New York, and apprentice herself to

the dress-making business, saying a situation could be procured, where, after a few weeks, she would be remunerated for her services, and that being alone, she would be only too happy to receive her as a companion, and that after having acquired a thorough knowledge of the business, she could open a place for herself with the assurance of all the assistance which was in her power.

It was a severe struggle for Mrs. Eaton to part with her darling child, — her Agnes. Her heart sank within her at the thought that the petted and idolized beauty, the fond mother's hope and the pride of that household should be subjected to labor for remuneration which at best could only afford them a scanty subsistence, and again she looked toward the stately mansion which was once their home, where age with its wrinkled brow of care had joined, with youth, and beauty in the festivities of the hour on many eventful occasions, now past and gone forever. And the scalding tears fell thick and fast as she thought of him who had left them, and that as the grave closed over his remains, the dark cloud of their misfortunes arose which soon enveloped them in poverty and distress. And again as she thought of that wicked city, that "Sodom" of iniquity, of the

temptations laid for the young and beautiful, the snares spread for the feet of the innocent, she trembled for the fate of her beloved Agnes.

Not so with Agnes; no formidable trials flitted across her mind, no dark shadows of temptation awoke her from her childish dreams of innocence; she knew not the world nor the dark mazes through which she must tread, in her journey through it. All to her was fair. Alas! poor girl, how little did she think that soon her heart would be as a blighted flower, and she doomed to servitude worse than death. With a noble spirit, cool and calculating, kind and affable in her manner, with a mind sufficiently strong to persevere in whatever she felt a sense of duty, and an ambition worthy of a mighty conqueror, she felt her success certain.

She left the paternal roof amid many warnings, admonitions, and tears, and the old house-dog who had watched by the grave of his master, now moaned and growled out his farewell as a requiem for the departed Agnes, and we also take our leave of Mrs. Eaton in her sorrow, and the old homestead, and follow the fate of Agnes.

After a lonely journey of a few hours, she arrived in New York, and found her sister pale and care-

worn, in deep distress, consequent upon the sudden illness of her little daughter, the only descendant of the deceased brother of Agnes, from which she never recovered, but on the third day after her arrival she closed its eyes in death, and it was laid in the tomb with its father to await the doom of the resurrection morn. "Loved ones, rest in peace!"

After a few days of mourning and quiet, Agnes entered on the duties of her mission in the establishment of a fashionable French modiste on Broadway, where she soon became a general favorite of all, and at the end of six months, displayed such artistic taste and proficiency as placed her at the head of the establishment as chief designer; but the duties of that arduous position soon began to wear upon her. With her self-sacrificing spirit and a will to excel in any undertaking, with a mind devoted to the interest of her employer, many were the sleepless nights through which she passed, and mornings unrefreshed that she arose to resume the labors of the day. The tax upon her physical and mental faculties was too great long to be endured.

One evening as in passing through the store on her way home she observed a middle-aged gentleman in close conversation with Madame Lamont. After

saying a few words to her in an undertone, with a bland smile she repeated, good night Madame, and went her way.

“If you do not deem it impertinent, Madame,” said the gentleman, “I would like to ask who that young lady is.”

“Oh, that is Miss Eaton, my designer,” replied Madame Lamont, drawing herself up to her full height, and assuming an air of dignity, “she is from Connecticut, she is a young lady of very fine mind, highly educated, and a disposition without a fault, and has seen better days. The family were at one time very wealthy, but at the death of her father became unexpectedly poor, and now, like many others, the poor thing is obliged to work! She Americanizes our Paris fashions, and makes them more congenial to the taste of our New York ladies.”

Madame Lamont was a little below the medium height, yet on the sunny side of forty, rather stout, fair complexion, blue eyes, light, thin hair, which was disposed of in front by a few straggling curls. She was kind and affable in her manner, communicative in conversation, and like most French ladies, lively, witty, and good company, but jealous and revengeful.

The gentleman with whom she was conversing, Mr. Alling, was a native of the western part of the State of Virginia, a little past the middle age of mankind, of tall, commanding figure, rather coarse, marked features, a profusion of black hair and whiskers, keen black eyes, peering out from under a wide, projecting forehead, and shaded by long, thick, bushy eyebrows, and a mouth which indicated firmness, and decision, not very prepossessing in appearance, and the careful reader of human nature could see indelibly marked on his brow, "My word is law." He was kind and generous to his own immediate friends, but intriguing, fiery and revengeful; reserved in his manners, seldom entering into conversation except to accomplish some object which lay near his heart, but would spare no expense of time or money to accomplish his desires, and being very little accustomed to refined society, whenever he wished to gain a point he made money his passport. Such the description, and such the disposition of the gentleman who gazed after the lovely form of Agnes as she flitted past the window, and mingling in the busy throng, in an instant was lost to sight.

He was at once touched by the simple story of Agnes as told by Madame Lamont, and determined

to make her acquaintance, and hear from her own lips a recital of her misfortunes. After a few moments more of conversation, and a promise to renew his visit on the following evening, Mr. Alling took his leave of Madame Lamont, and wended his way thoughtfully towards his hotel, musing upon the strange events which should so impress his mind in favor of Agnes at first sight, when Cupid's darts had passed him by untouched for forty-five years.

The following day Madame entered the designing room, and addressing herself to Miss Eaton, said, “ My dear Agnes, I heard a gentleman speaking of you last night in very flattering terms.”

“ Did you, indeed,” replied Agnes with a cunning smile, “ and who might he be? I was not aware I had any gentlemen friends in the city.”

“ You saw the gentleman who was talking with me as you passed through last evening,” said Madame.

“ Oh, yes! but I took no notice of him, only as I saw he was a stranger. Surely you don’t wish me to think it was him, he doesn’t know me.”

“ No,” said Madame, “ but he wishes to make your acquaintance, and will call this evening, when, if you are willing, I should be pleased to give you an introduction.”

“ Well,” replied Agnes, “ I don’t know that I have any very serious objections to an introduction, but I am sure I don’t see what it can possibly avail him or what good it can do me. Why,” she continued, bursting into a wild, girlish laugh, “ he is old enough to be my father, and for aught I know grandfather, judging from his ancient look, I should think he might be the last of his race. I suppose he claims relationship to Captain John Smith, doesn’t he? or perhaps prides himself upon being a direct descendant of the heroic Pocahontas.”

“ This jesting may be all very well, when one’s heart is light and free as yours, my dear Agnes, but remember the old adage, ‘ it is better to be the pet of an old man, than the slave of a young one,’ and besides, Mr. Alling has many good qualities which only require a little brushing and polishing to make them appear like diamonds,” said Madame Lamont, as she quitted the room, and left Agnes to her own reflections.

That evening Agnes was duly introduced to the aristocratic Mr. Alling, and half an hour later she summoned all her energies to suppress the laugh, and choke the words of mirthful levity that trembled on her lips as she accepted him as her escort to her

home. "Age before beauty," you know said Agnes, in a whisper, adding in the same breath, good night, Madame, as she passed through the door, and in an instant was out of sight. As they pursued their walk Mr. Alling was delighted with the lively and brilliant conversation of his gentle companion, and in answer to the question, what brought her to the great city, one so young and unprotected, she touched lightly upon the story of her misfortunes with a tender and delicate hand, and painted in glowing colors her hopes and prospects in the future, which her ambitious spirit led her to believe might be realized, but gave a decided negative to all his propositions or solicitations for farther acquaintance.

Mr. Alling was entranced with her eloquence, and his heart stood still at the touching story, and when they arrived at her home, he renewed his earnest request for another interview, which she persistently refused, and he bade her good-night with a hearty "God bless you," and two days after, left for his Southern home.

On the following day, Agnes was interrogated by Madame Lamont as to how she liked her new acquaintance.

"Oh," replied Agnes, "I made the same dis-

covery you spoke of, that he has good qualities which only require brushing and polishing; but I think in order to make them like diamonds, it would require more labor than I care to bestow upon my husband, at least without a certainty of success to my satisfaction."

CHAPTER II.

IT is now November. Summer has passed into the sere and yellow leaf of autumn, trembling yet lingering, acknowledging the succession to the throne of nature of the “Frost King.” As the sun shines upon the leaves of the forest in their varied hues painted by his skilful hand, and as imbecile age tottering on the verge of the tomb with threadbare garments, strength and energy gone, his locks white with the frosts of many years, and, leaning upon his staff, turns to take one fond look of earth, ere he passes away to be seen no more, so the “Indian Summer,” with its short, but balmy days, comes to tell us of the death of Summer, ere it is shrouded in the icy embrace of Winter.

November with its spring-like days, and frosty nights, its falling leaves, and decaying vegetation is here, ere Mr. Alling leaves for his home in the Sunny South.

Leaving Agnes to her usual occupation, we pass over the brief period intervening between November and February, and Mr. Alling is again in New York.

During the busy season attendant upon the Holidays, the demands were too much for Agnes's delicate constitution, her strength failed her, she was prostrated upon a bed of sickness, and for four weeks was unable to leave her room; but now slowly recovering in health and strength, she is again found at her accustomed place in the designing-room. One evening about the middle of February, as she was walking thoughtfully towards her home, taking no notice of the jostling crowd as they passed hurriedly by, wrapped in their warm furs, busy with her own thoughts, calculating the time it would take to gain an even footing with the world, after the expenses of her sickness should have been paid, without encroaching upon the little sum which she laid aside weekly for her mother. The future to her, for a time at least, looked gloomy and dark; in health her mind and hands were overtaxed, and in sickness her greatest anxiety was the fear that her mother might suffer severely before she would be able to render her any farther assistance. Even the cool

and calculating mind of Agnes could not foresee any means whereby she could liquidate the debt incurred by her illness. Her mind often reverted to Mr. Alling, and she could almost think it would have been better had she accepted his proposals, even though it had ended at the altar, and she become his bride, as his ready wealth would supply all her wants, and give her the means of making her mother comfortable and happy for life. Alas ! for human nature, money is the golden hinge on which the door of our destiny turns ; and as Agnes was slowly crossing the great thoroughfare, picking her way here and there through the snow and slosh, she was startled with a noise, screaming, “ Halloa there ! hurry up, miss ! ” and looking up saw it proceeded from an omnibus driver, muffled to the eyes, vainly trying to hold his horses whose feet were prancing above her head. With a scream and a desperate bound she gained the opposite side of the street, landing upon the sidewalk, pale and trembling. The light of the lamp shining full in her face, revealed her fair features, before pale with sickness and care, now livid from fear, and her trembling limbs almost refused her support. She walked slowly on, and had only proceeded a short distance, when she felt the

weight of a hand upon her shoulder, and a voice accosted her with, — “ My pretty miss, you oughtn’t to be travelling by yourself after night, it isn’t safe.” Uttering a piercing cry, she fainted and fell into the arms of the stranger, who bore her to her home, causing much curiosity among the crowd as he almost flew along the street.

On being interrogated by a man wearing the unmistakable garb of the police, as to what he had, and where he was going, he answered hurriedly, without stopping, “ I have a precious burden, sir, my name is Alling, I board at —— Hotel, if you want any farther information, call,” he shouted at the top of his voice as he left him far in the distance.

We will not attempt to describe the scene of confusion which followed when Agnes was carried into her sister’s house, more dead than alive. Suffice it to say Mr. Alling took his leave, just as returning consciousness reminded him he would be recognized, choosing rather to remain as he then was, a stranger, at least for the present, to all around him.

The following morning he called at the door to ask after the health of Miss Eaton. At the earnest request of Agnes to see him who had so kindly cared for her the previous evening, he was ushered into her

presence, and stood before her, revealing to her astonished gaze, her rejected lover. He related what had happened since he last saw her, how she was constantly in his dreams by night, and his visions by day, that wherever he went or whatever he did, she would flit by him as an angel of light, keeping guard over him, and that he was no longer happy in his bachelor home, and had left the sunny South to see her face again, and hear the sweet music of her voice.

We cannot enter into the details of that meeting or of many subsequent ones, but the reader must be content with the assurance that Agnes went no more to the establishment of Madame Lamont in her usual capacity, but after a few weeks became Mrs. Alling,—Agnes Alling,—the heroine of our story, and a few days thereafter, was duly settled in an elegant house, with a kind and indulgent husband, and the recipient of every blessing that wealth could procure, besides placing her mother in an easy and comfortable position, free from care, and apparently beyond the reach of want.

We are supposed to pass over six months of time, which brings us to the opening of our story. For a short time previous to Mr. Alling's declaring his in-

tention to visit California, he had been sullen and morose, scarcely deigning a civil answer to any one, cool and distant to Agnes, and would sit for hours whispering to himself, evidently in trouble, but at what, none could conjecture. Agnes began to think of herself more as a confined bird, than as a tender and confiding wife, who should be partner of his joys and sorrows, for it was evident to her, that some great conflict was going on in his mind, which he did not care to reveal, and she began to fear that she might awake from her dream of happiness when it was too late, and find that she had sacrificed herself on the altar of sordid wealth ; but she hoped for the best, and believed that if she really possessed his affections, she was capable of winning him back to his former self.

On the day following the one on which Agnes broke the news of their departure to her mother, Mr. Alling arrived, and after paying a short visit, took a hasty farewell of Mrs. Eaton, with whom Agnes parted with many sighs and tears, and the following day, fifth, of September, set sail for the great Eldorado of the Pacific. The good steamship which was to bear them over the ocean, was heavily freighted, having on board about a thousand souls, but sat

steadily upon the waves, until in passing the stormy Cape she was struck by a heavy squall which it seemed must engulf her, with all her human freight, in the vasty deep. Oh, the awful grandeur of that scene ! the lightnings flashing and playing around like so many fiery serpents, the wind sighing and whistling through the rigging, old ocean lashed into fury, yawning and playing with that noble ship, as if she were a bubble of glass upon its surface, the white-capped waves rolling to their mountain heights, threatening with each successive wave, to sweep them down into that dark, awful abyss. Prayers and groans ascended from every quarter of the ship ; stout hearts unused to tears, wept at the memory of the loved ones they had left ; prayers arose from hearts that never prayed, mingling strangely with the voices of the wicked wretches, who, with defiant gestures, swore horrid oaths at the violence of the storm. The blackness of darkness was over the face of the deep ; the good ship creaked and groaned heavily as if supplicating the mercy of Heaven on her cargo of priceless souls. Twelve hours in that awful Gulf Stream, and the ordeal was past. The sun rose in its beauty over the mighty deep, and smiled on that vast expanse of water, now cool and placid as a

tranquil lake. On sped the noble ship, and in six days after, anchored in the port of Aspinwall. Crossing over the Isthmus by railroad, they embarked on board the Company's Steamer in the Bay of Panama, and proceeded on their way to San Francisco. Among the passengers who attracted the immediate notice of Agnes, was a gentleman, lady, and two beautiful children ; the father apparently about thirty-three years of age, high, intellectual forehead, fine, manly bearing, and his general appearance indicating one in the higher walks of life. The mother, about three years younger, was tall, graceful, and surpassingly beautiful ; she seemed not to care for making acquaintances or conversing with any one on ship-board, and passed most of her time in the company of her husband and children, but appeared dejected and melancholy. Various were the rumors rife in the ship concerning this little family group ; some said he was a defaulter to a large amount, and fleeing from justice ; others, that being very wealthy, and through mismanagement becoming suddenly poor, he had determined to retrieve his fortune by some means or other, in the Eureka State. The two little daughters were respectively six and eight years of age, delicately

formed, and with a complexion of the finest texture, they seemed more like angels than beings of earth, and often would gaze at their mother with looks of pity, and wonder in their little hearts the cause of her grief, but without a word of inquiry would turn sorrowfully away with a sigh, to engage in their childish sports.

Seven days after leaving Panama, they anchored in the Bay of Acapulco, to take in coal, water, and provisions, and give the passengers an opportunity to exercise their limbs by a run on shore.

Mr. Alling and Agnes joined a party which was forming to spend a few hours in visiting the old ruins, and regale themselves among groves of orange, pineapple, and cocoanut, and entering the little boats rowed by the half-naked, chattering natives, put off for the shore.

There was not much of interest to be seen in this old Spanish town, now almost deserted, owing to a recent battle between Santa Anna and Alvarez. The day was very hot, the sun pouring down with its intensest rays. Our party, after having peeped into a score or more of huts, beside being persecuted by a rabble of half grown ragged boys and girls, holding out their fruits, shells, sea coral, and various

other things for sale, with, "Presente, presente por usted Senora," (present for you madam), stopping at the door of an old Adobe building, which had quite an air of cleanliness and comfort inside, inquired if they could get some dinner there, and were answered in the affirmative.

Here it would perhaps be well to say to our readers, that we do not propose to enter into the details of all that passed on shore, as we only stop long enough to take in the characters that will hereafter figure in our story, or to describe minutely that sea voyage, as we wish to hurry Agnes on to her destination.

While the dinner was preparing, our party busied themselves by looking about the premises and asking the use of this thing and the name of that, but to all their questions were answered in Spanish, of which they knew but very little, and some of them nothing: but supposing they would be thought unfriendly by the natives if they remained silent, they kept up a continual talking, though to no purpose, as they could neither make themselves intelligible nor understand those with whom they conversed. When dinner was served there presided at the table a woman whom they had not before seen, middle

aged, rather swarthy complexion, though many shades lighter than those by whom she was surrounded, and speaking the English language though broken and mixed with that of the natives, which indicated that she had been there many years and partially forgotten her mother tongue, or, that she had seen much more of Americans, and acquired a knowledge of the language, when no one of her female associates seemed to know a word of it. She brought wine and eggs, bananas, cocoanuts, and other tropical fruits, and urged them to partake, entering into lively and spirited conversation with Agnes, but told nothing of her former life. After spending two or three hours pleasantly, and the gun being fired, which was the signal for them to come on board, they all shook hands with their kind hostess, with many wishes for her welfare; but to Agnes she came the second time, and shaking her again heartily by the hand, bade her good-by, lifting the ample folds of her skirt to wipe away the fast-falling tears.

“ Oh, don’t cry, good woman ! ” said Agnes; “ don’t feel bad ! we will meet again sometime. I will come back and see you in a year on my way home ; ” and with another shake of the hand she

hurried away, leaving the old lady weeping and looking anxiously after them till they were lost to sight.

“How strange it is you always find somebody to cry after you everywhere you go! don’t you, Agnes?” said Mr. Alling, as they went on board the ship.

“It seems so indeed,” replied Agnes, “but I can’t help that. I don’t know why it is that this Spanish or American woman, whatever she may be, should think anything of me more than any one else, but she evidently did so.”

Once more on board the ship, and all things being ready, they again started on their journey over the trackless deep. On the following morning, the youngest and by far the most beautiful of the angelic children of Mrs. St. John, was found to be in a high fever and delirious, from the effects of a fall down the gangway of the ship, though at the time she did not appear to be much hurt; but her injuries being internal, manifested themselves after sleeping. The ship’s physician was called, and everything done to allay the intense inflammation, and relieve the little sufferer. The mother watched constantly by her side in a perfect fever of excite-

ment, eagerly waiting for the least glimpse of returning reason, yet for twenty-four hours no change was visible.

Mrs. Alling called to inquire after the health of little Mary, and offer any assistance which was in her power, and was told by Mrs. St. John, after politely thanking her for her kind offer, that she did not appear any better.

"But," she continued, "the doctor thinks that by twelve o'clock to-night there will be a change, and we hope for a favorable one."

Mrs. Alling retired to her own room deeply sympathizing with Mrs. St. John in her affliction. Though hitherto they had been as strangers, yet the warm, glowing heart of Agnes could not but shudder at the thought of that beautiful form, only but yesterday so full of life and animation, perhaps before another sun should set, being consigned to a watery grave; then laying herself down, she was soon lost in slumber. Scarcely had two bells rung out their solemn peal on the midnight air, when she awoke from her sleep to find they were in the midst of a most terrific gale; the wind whistling through the rigging, the ship pitching and plunging, the sky overcast with black clouds, with only here and there

a star which dared to show its twinkling light, the angry sea roared and foamed as if groaning out the requiem of some lost soul ; and above all, the voice of the stern old commander as he paced the deck, now and then pausing in his round to catch a firm hold of the mast or something which would afford him a momentary support, as the ship gave a sudden lurch.

Agnes sprang from her couch wild with fright, and seated herself on a low stool, holding fast to her berth to prevent being thrown down by the motion of the plunging ship, listening to the awful roar of the elements without, and the deep, sonorous breathing of Mr. Alling in his heavy sleep, during the intervals of which, she distinguished the sound of loud groans and incoherent words proceeding from the cabin below. She at once thought of Mrs. St. John in her trouble, and feared that perhaps twelve o'clock might have wrought an unfavorable change in her darling child. She was wondering in her own mind whether she could reach the cabin in safety if she should make the attempt, when Mr. Alling started up and called out to know what was the matter, why she was sitting there instead of being in bed ; to which she replied : —

"We are in the midst of an awful storm; don't you hear the ocean roar? and now,—now we are going," she cried, as the ship rose high upon a wave, but settled gradually down again as it subsided.

Agnes told her husband of her fears concerning the little one, at the same time declaring her intention to go down and see if she could render them any assistance. Waiting till the ship had gained an upright position and appeared to sit steady upon the water, and all seemed quiet for a moment, she made an effort to go, and had just gained the outside of her door when the ship made an awful plunge, and she was thrown with great violence against the guards. For an instant she seemed lost to consciousness, but was roused by the hoarse voice of the captain, saying,—

"Why Mrs. Alling, what is the matter?—Where are you going? not going to commit suicide by throwing yourself overboard, are you?" at the same time taking hold of her arm.

"Oh Captain! this is an awful night, isn't it? I did not think of such a gale as this; it was very calm and still when I retired."

"Oh yes! they get up a pretty smart gale at short notice, along here, sometimes," he replied,

with an assumed air of indifference ; " but shall I assist you into your room ? "

" No," replied Agnes, " I wish to go below, do you think I can get there ? "

" Well I think so," said the captain ; " we will try. And," continued he, " I believe that little girl is about dying ; the doctor says it is beyond human skill to save her.

" Poor thing ! " sighed she ; " and such a night as this to die seems even more dreadful ; " and pilot-ed by the captain, now catching hold of some sta-tionary object, now proceeding on a few steps, and then stopping again to brace themselves while the ship made another fearful lunge, they at last gained the cabin. Darkness reigned supreme, with the ex-ception of a solitary lantern which hung suspended from the middle of the ceiling, whose feeble light shone sparingly around, and which on this occasion was rendered more dim by an additional shade of ground glass. Scarcely any object was visible, but on close observation the settees were found to be all occupied by drowsy sleepers, who slept on unconscious of their danger, except here and there one would raise her head and utter some incoherent words as Agnes crept softly by them, attracted by the stifled sobs

and deep groans of the sorrowing mother. At the extreme end of the cabin, seated on a sofa, and in darkness, for the feeble rays of the lantern scarce penetrated that distance, sat Mrs. St. John, frantic with grief, not seeming to notice the awful storm that was raging without, or the wild waves as they dashed over the deck and leaped down the gangway, but sat motionless as a statue, apparently listening to catch some sound from the state-room where lay the little Mary in the agonies of death. Bursting into a wild shriek of anguish, she implored Heaven, with uplifted hands, to have mercy and spare her idol, her darling child.

In answer to the inquiry, “ How is little Mary ? ” Mrs. St. John looked up, and clutching Agnes with both hands, like one just escaped from the mad-house, screamed out : —

“ Oh, my child ! my child is dying ! They have sent me out, they won’t let me see it die ! Oh, my child ! my poor child ! ”

Agnes sat by the side of Mrs. St. John, mingling her tears with hers in sympathy for the loss of little Mary, and endeavoring by kind, consoling words to restrain her in her grief from those piercing shrieks which at intervals rent the air.

The gray dawn of the morning had begun to light up the eastern horizon, when Mrs. Alling again sought her own room. Mr. Alling was up and pacing the deck with his hands folded behind him, and his eyes fastened upon the floor in his usual thoughtful mood. He started suddenly as she passed by him, and looking up, seeing sadness depicted on her countenance, and her eyes red with weeping, remarked :—

“ The child is dead.”

“ Yes,” replied Agnes, and passing into her state-room, threw herself upon her pillow, and soon fell asleep ; from which she was awakened by the ringing of the bell, and a loud voice calling, “ All hands on deck to bury the dead.” She started suddenly from her couch, and looked about like one awoke from a frightful dream, but the awful reality soon rushed upon her mind, and remembering the sad events of the preceding night, she made a hasty toilet and accompanied by Mr. Alling, walked out to attend for the first time in her life, a funeral at sea. The storm had subsided, but the sea was far, very far from calm ; the waves still ran high ; it was thought impracticable to stop the ship entirely, (as was customary,) as well as unnecessary, as she was making

but little progress at the time. The solemn and impressive burial service of the Church of England was read amid many sighs and tears of the passengers, and the frantic grief of the agonized parents, and when those terrible words were uttered, "Ashes to ashes, dust to dust," the lovely form of little Mary was gently lowered over the side of that noble ship, and sunk to its last resting-place in the bosom of the mighty ocean to await on that coral bed, the dawn of the resurrection morn. One by one the passengers retired with sad countenances from that solemn scene, each one seeming to participate in the grief of the bereaved, except Mr. Alling who appeared to regard it as a matter of course, and in his usual sullen and morose mood, looked on with stoical indifference, his mind evidently busy with things far away.

On arriving at San Francisco they all separated, each one to his own friends or place of destination, and many of them never met again. Mr. and Mrs. St. John and their remaining child left on the evening boat for some place up the valley of the Sacramento, and we take our leave of them for the present.

Mr. and Mrs. Alling having no friends or acquaintances, and not settled on any particular place of destination, proceeded at once to one of the most

fashionable hotels, and took up their abode at the very moderate price of twelve dollars a day. After remaining a few days, and Mr. Alling being unsuccessful in finding the parties with whom he had business transactions which brought him to San Francisco, and his money fast slipping through his fingers, with the prospect of being left in a strange country without friends or money, staring him in the face, he became more and more sullen, and at times peevish and fretful, spoke less frequently to Agnes, and then in a sharp, upbraiding tone, and again relapsing into a dreamy stupor would sit like a statue for hours without seeming to have even one thought for the future. The kind heart of the beautiful Agnes, only a few months previous the loving bride of the reputed wealthy Southerner, as she looked upon him now in his present condition felt more of pity than of censure, knowing that he had very little knowledge of business, that the art of labor had not been taught him in his youth, and in his Southern home he had had every comfort which can be obtained in slave countries, and hence was unprepared for reverses. Her cool and calculating mind soon suggested a change. She saw at a glance, that if they remained in their present quarters, they must soon

come to want ; and what remained for her in the future, she was entirely at a loss to know. Unwilling to believe she was deceived in the man of her choice, yet forced to see thorns springing up in her path, where hitherto, she had thought only flowers could flourish ; and feeling that she had not that confidence which she wished to have in Mr. Alling's capabilities to support her, her mind wandered back to the establishment of Madame Lamont, and her New England home, and for a time she almost wished herself back in her old place, in the designing-room.

Mrs. Alling's was not a spirit long to be cast down, but looking on the bright side of every picture she would not see the dark spots until they were actually forced upon her.

“ What are we to do, Agnes ? ” said Mr. Alling, one day, after sitting two hours without speaking.

“ Do about what, my dear,” she said, looking up with a smile, it being the first time she remembered of her advice being called for.

“ Why, I ask what are we to do ? if we remain here longer, our money will be gone, and if we get none from home, what will become of us ? We have no friends here ; something must be done, and I don't see anything I can do without money. If I

had money I might go into some speculation which perhaps would pay, but without it I don't see that I can do anything. What is to be done? I don't like to trouble you with such a question, Agnes, but perhaps with your native New England calculation, you may form some plan to get out of this dilemma which I cannot see."

"Why," she replied, pleased with the unusual flow of words and freedom, with which Mr. Alling had stated the case, hoping that it was a prelude to his throwing off those fits of stupor, and being more a companion for time to come; "Why, I think we had better look for a cheaper boarding-place, to begin with, where it will not cost so much to stay, while you are waiting for remittances or looking for business; it is too expensive at this house."

"Yes," replied Mr. Alling, "but God knows it is poor enough; we don't want any worse fare than we get here."

"Even so," said Agnes, "but remember the old adage. 'Circumstances alter cases,' and if there is a change in our circumstances, we must accommodate ourselves to it, and do with less. The first thing I see for us to do, is to reduce our expenses."

"Well, but it is too bad Agnes, for you to be

deprived of anything you want," said Mr. Alling, assuming a look of sadness. "God knows you have had a hard time enough in your life, without any more trouble."

"I think there is no one feels the truth of that remark more than I do; but we must hope for the best, there is no use borrowing trouble. If the night before us looks dark, we must feel our way until we get into the daylight where we can see clearly. I can put up with what you can, my dear," continued she, "if it is bread and water in a garret; and I think we had better change our quarters this very afternoon."

"You are a trump, Agnes," replied Mr. Alling; "you are worth a mint of money to any man. I must kiss you for that," and suiting the action to the word, he threw his arms around her in one ardent, loving embrace.

"Now don't!" said she, looking up with a roguish smile as in the palmy days of her girlhood. "Now don't! it is so long since I have had a kiss I have almost forgotten how it seems, and you may be sorry if you get me in the way of it again."

"Oh no, no! don't say so! you are a good girl any way! you are indeed!" said her husband.

"Is it possible! why, you don't mean it!" she replied, playfully. "Honor bright and shining, now, do you really think I am a good girl?"

"Come, come, don't let us have any more nonsense now; you know what I mean, so put on your things if you want to go, and we will see what we can find in the way of a boarding house," said Mr. Alling, walking hurriedly across the room.

"In what direction are you going?" inquired she, as they descended the long flight of stairs and stepped out into the open air.

"I think toward the upper part of the city," replied Mr. Alling. "I have been told there are some very fine private boarding-houses up about Stockton Street," and they passed on, slowly climbing the hill up which led California Street, until they arrived at the junction of California and Stockton streets; then proceeding down the latter toward North Beach, passed a block of low wooden buildings, several of which advertised rooms to let with board, but not looking very inviting in their outward appearance, they still walked on until they stopped in front of a very pretty cottage, which, in comparison with the surrounding ones, was really palatial, setting back from the street upon an elevated site,

commanding a fine view of the city and bay. The grounds around were beautifully terraced, laid out with exquisite taste, and filled with every variety of the most fragrant flowers, while here and there some oriental urn poured forth from its crater-like mouth a volume of the richest flowers peculiar to the climate. It was altogether a beautiful place, and for a country in its infancy, it was indeed a princely mansion, and the only one that seemed to suit Mr. Alling's ideas of living.

"Perhaps we can get good accommodations here. I think this is the house I was directed to," said Mr. Alling; "and Agnes, isn't there a notice on the door? You just run up and see what it reads," continued he; "you are young and your eyesight is good."

She ran up the first flight of five or six stone steps into the garden, then again up three or four more into the piazza, and read: —

"Two or three respectable gentlemen and their wives can be accommodated with board on reasonable terms."

Then motioning to Mr. Alling he ascended the steps. They were soon ushered into the magnificently furnished parlor to await the coming of the

landlady, who soon made her appearance. She was apparently about thirty years of age, of medium height, light hair cut short, blue eyes, pale and intellectual, but prepossessing and pleasing in her manners, and dignified in appearance. Mr. Alling rose as she entered, and made his business known in few words, saying :—

“ Madame, we called to see if we could get board with you.”

“ For yourself and, — and daughter,” interrupted the lady, casting a quizzical glance at Agnes.

“ No, this is my wife,” replied Mr. Alling.

“ Ah ! excuse me sir,” said she, slightly coloring ; “ but I thought —”

“ You are excusable madam,” said Mr. Alling, “ it is not the first time we have been taken for father and daughter,” casting a look with a proud smile at the youthful and beautiful Agnes.

Mrs. Lefond conversed for some time in a lively and spirited manner, but in a strain calculated to leave a good impression on the minds of her visitors ; and by her keen perception soon discovered in the modest deportment and retiring manners of Agnes, one whom she thought would fall an easy prey to her cunning devices, and become a valuable instru-

ment in her hands to work out her deeds of darkness and shame.

All arrangements were soon completed, board was engaged at the rate of fifty dollars a week, the room selected, and early on the following day they removed their goods and effects to their new lodgings.

Time passed by smoothly and rapidly; all things were pleasant and agreeable. Nothing happened to mar the peace and happiness of Mr. and Mrs. Alling in their new home. The days went by cheerily, and the evenings were spent in pleasing conversation and music, of which Mrs. Lefond was a professor of high standing, "and all went merry as a marriage bell."

The house, as we have before remarked, was furnished in a style, unsurpassed in those days for magnificence and grandeur; and those who made their home there must be in keeping, as only those of the higher class of society could be accommodated.

One evening as they had assembled, a little family circle of the boarders, in the elegant parlor, and were listening with intense emotion to a pathetic and favorite song as sung by the fair hostess, while she accompanied herself with ease and grace on the piano, the door opened, and black Bess, the fat,

shiny old cook entered, bearing a small silver tray on which lay a delicately folded letter, wrapped in an envelope of finely tinted paper, and sidling up to the side of Mrs. Lefond, stood holding it and waiting for a pause in the music, with mouth and eyes wide open, occasionally glancing round with an air of dignity, as if she was some distinguished person, the bearer of important dispatches.

“ What have you here, Bess? where did you get this? ” said the lady, at the same time taking the note from the salver, the song being ended.

“ Duno missus, letter s’pose ; one berry fine gemman give it to me, and say I give it my missus.”

“ I suppose it is ; it certainly has very much the appearance of one,” said Mrs. Lefond, smiling, as Bess retreated a few steps toward the door and then stopped and turned round to wait for further orders.

“ You may go, Bess,” said her mistress.

“ Berry well, missus,” said Bess, bowing, and taking a few more steps stopped again, evidently intent on knowing what news her mistress had in the letter.

“ You may go, Bess ; I have no farther orders at present,” said Mrs. Lefond, sharply.

“ Berry well, bery well, missus ; me going, going, clean gone,” said Bess, as she disappeared through the door ; and closing it after her, in an instant opened it again just far enough to protrude her woolly head, and muttered through her teeth :—

“ Remember what dat is you say to Bess dare, missus.”

“ Yes, yes, I remember all about it Bess ; begone now, and attend to your own work ! ” said Mrs. Lefond, angrily, and proceeded to open the letter which read as follows :—

“ MRS. LEFOND :

DEAR MADAM :— We, the undersigned, Trustees of the church of which you are a valuable member, at the earnest request of many citizens, and in behalf of the choir where you have been so long and favorably known, do appeal to you, and most humbly beg that you will repeat, on next Sabbath morning, the grand oratorio which was so ably performed by you at the dedication services a few days since. Hoping that you will not hesitate to grant a request which is not only highly gratifying to all lovers of music, but gains for you a name which few enjoy, and all might envy, We remain, very respectfully, yours,

— — — ”

She read the note aloud; though pretending to read to herself, yet sufficiently loud for every one to hear. Lifting her large blue eyes, she cast them inquiringly round to observe what effect the reading had produced on the company, then fixing them intently upon Agnes, with pouting lips, like a petted and half-spoiled child, said, —

“ It is too bad, I declare it is ! for them to ask me to repeat that ; they little realize the labor and anxiety attending the execution of such a piece of music before a large audience, and particularly when one isn’t much accustomed to singing in public ; but,” continued she, “ I will do just as you say, Mrs. Alling, if you think I ought to repeat it, I will do so ; but I think it is too bad, indeed I do ! don’t you think so ? ”

“ I do not think it too bad ; I think it is paying you a great compliment to make that request ; I should consider it so. If I were gifted with such wonderful vocal powers as you possess, I should be most happy to display them on all proper occasions, as I must plead guilty to the charge of a little of the vanity of our sex,” replied Agnes.

“ Do you think I sing well ? I don’t think I do,” said Mrs. Lefond, trying to look modest and retiring, like a verdant country girl.

“ Why, I think you are a perfect nightingale,” replied Agnes. “ You ought never to say no when you are asked to sing.”

“ Well I don’t know as I ought, but at any rate I suppose I must comply with this request as it is for the church ; ” and putting on a very sanctimonious look, continued, “ I have been a member of that church so long, they think I must not refuse them anything.”

“ Dar is whar dey is right missus, when de bird can sing and dey won’t sing, dey must make em sing,” chimed in old Bess who had been gaping, unperceived, through the crack of the door which was slightly ajar, to which all the company assented, and Bess, receiving a severe rebuke from her mistress for her prying curiosity, took herself off to her quarters in the kitchen. Soon the clock chimed out eleven, and the company broke up for the night.

CHAPTER III.

“I AM at a loss to know what to think of that woman — Mrs. Lefond,” said Mrs. Alling to her husband, one evening as they were sitting by themselves in their room.

“Think of her, why, what do you want to think of her? and how came you to speak of her now?” said Mr. Alling, casting a very suspicious glance at his wife.

“Oh, I don’t know! but the more I see of her, the more I am in darkness concerning her. There is a something about her I cannot understand; either she is a saint or a demon; and if a demon, she assumes the livery of heaven to carry out her fiendish designs,” replied Agnes.

“She certainly is a very smart, shrewd woman; but I don’t know why you should think her a demon,” said Mr. Alling. “She has always treated you well, and appears to think a great deal of you.”

“Yes, but I cannot exactly define her position;

she does appear to think very much of me, but whether it is real or only assumed to accomplish some purpose of her own, I cannot tell," she replied.

"Oh, there is no doubt but the woman is well enough, if you would mind your own affairs, and let her do the same; but you always make a confidant of people before you know them, and tell them all your secrets, and the first you know they betray you," said Mr. Alling, pettishly.

"I have not entrusted her with any of my secrets, nor do I intend to. I believe I am as capable of keeping my own secrets as any one else is for me. But let us turn the subject; time will prove all things," continued Agnes. "Isn't this a beautiful rose?" taking down a small vase containing a solitary, half-blown white rose, and seating herself by the open window commenced to snuff the fragrance from the opening leaves. "Only just smell it," continued she, "how fragrant it is!" at the same time reaching it toward Mr. Alling.

"Smell it yourself if you want to! What do I care about your flowers! I believe you think of nothing else but flowers and music," said Mr. Alling; "but who is that man over there looking this way? See, he is looking at you! do you know him?"

“ Me know him? no indeed! How should I know him? ” said Agnes. “ I saw him talking with Mrs. Lefond a day or two ago, over the garden fence, and admiring her flowers, but I don’t know him.”

“ There he is looking at you and laughing; the villain! ” said Mr. Alling.

“ Impudent wretch! ” said Agnes. “ But you must be mistaken, he is not laughing at me,” as she rose from her seat and, replacing the vase on her dressing-table, walked to the other side of the room.

In due time the rose wilted and faded, and Agnes threw it from the window and supplied its place with others freshly cut and fragrant.

We will now leave Agnes for a short time, to her own reflections and duties, and attempt to give the reader some little idea of the general character and disposition of Mrs. Lefond, and what was passing with her at this time. We have on a former occasion spoken briefly of her personal appearance, but said nothing of her general disposition, habits, or practices, as we detest the habit of writers generally, giving overdrawn and high colored descriptions of persons, creating beauties of the mind where none exist, and making angelic features, far above what

is human, therefore we shall confine ourselves to reality and not fiction, and give a very brief description of the base heart, sordid desires, and avaricious propensities of Mrs. Lefond, fearing only that language will be inadequate to the task.

Of the history of Mrs. Lefond we know very little, except that she was a native of one of the Middle States, of very humble parentage, and, at an early age, in some way, either adopted or otherwise, she became a member of the family of a planter, in the extreme South.

After remaining several years with them, in consequence of trouble in the family, caused by some cunning device or artifice of her own, she was sent out into the world to provide for herself. In order to get her out of sight and hearing of any member of the family, her passage was paid, and she immediately started for the North, where she set about procuring some means of a livelihood. After answering numerous advertisements of "Help wanted," of several kinds, and to act in various capacities, and travelling about in search of employment, she was advised by a friend, to engage as teacher of a small country school. But for this she was wholly unprepared, as her life in the South had not afforded her

the facilities for a liberal education, consequently she decided to enter the State Normal School, where, after two years of hard study, she received her diploma and went out a teacher. She however, soon after married. After a few brief years of not unalloyed conjugal bliss, she became a widow, with small means and large wants. Finding her income too little to supply her numerous demands, and being unwilling to labor, she decided to visit California, as she expressed it, to make her fortune, and determined, like many others, to do so at all hazards. She arrived in California in the early part of 1850, while that State was in its extreme infancy. Whether by the long, tedious sea voyage around Cape Horn, or by the difficult transit across the Isthmus by mule travel, conducted by a half-naked, and scarcely half-civilized chattering native, through jungles, across rivers, and over mountain summits, we are not advised, suffice it to say, she arrived in safety in San Francisco.

The scarcity of females at this early day in California, and the high appreciation in which they were held, afforded Mrs. Lefond ample opportunity for operation in almost any capacity in which she wished to act. After some deliberation and careful investi-

gatian, she decided to open a boarding-house, which, by the aid of some friends, was soon in operation, at the same time, fully determined in her own mind to keep none but first class boarders, or those with plenty of means, as they could pay the most liberally for any trouble they might cause her, or any favors she should bestow on them. Money was with her the one thing needful, and where she could not readily obtain that, clothing, diamonds, jewelry, building lots, or other valuables were brought into requisition. Added to this thirst for gold, was an innate desire to reign queen over all with whom she associated, and to impress them with a due sense of her honor, virtue, and goodness. For this, and the better to carry out her base purposes, and fill her purse with gold, she maintained, as far as outward appearance was concerned, an upright, modest deportment, with a sanctimonious face, heavenly expression, and an air of innocence. Ever ready to assist the needy, and find excuses to palliate the crimes of the unfortunate, she would often remark ;—

“ Poor human nature is weak, and none of us are without sin ; we should be charitable to all, as the good Book says ‘ Charity covereth a multitude of

sins ;' we should try and imitate the example of our Divine Master and 'Do unto others as you would others should do unto you.'"

At the same time these words were passing her lips, she was thinking of another object, and perhaps gloating over the idea that those with whom she was conversing were all attention and reverence, overawed with her sanctity, and therefore the more easily blinded to her faults. As we have before remarked, she was educated, talented and refined, at least outwardly, but a fiend from the infernal regions, if it were possible that such a one could appear on earth, could not possess a blacker heart. Not long after she became installed in her new home and her great musical qualities were made known, she was earnestly solicited to lead the choir in a new church just being organized, also to become a member of that body, which she accordingly did, as to assume the garb of religion would be another barrier against suspicion, and she would have the protection of the church in case any of her base designs or intrigues were suspected and investigated.

She was duly installed as boarding mistress, member of the church, leader of the choir, and believed by all who knew her to be a most honorable, pious,

and devoted woman, and now she is ready to commence her operations on the unwary.

Up to the time that Mr. and Mrs. Alling became inmates of her house, her dishonorable plots and transactions had been many. As we said before, the scarcity of ladies did not afford her as good an opportunity to practise her arts as she desired, and up to this time her operations in that way were of minor import, and not materially affecting our story. We will pass them by and show that part of the drama she attempted to play with her new boarders. It had long been a study with Mrs. Lafond how to inveigle Agnes into some dishonorable position, which would serve to lower her in the estimation of all who knew her, and bring about a separation between her and her husband, for what purpose no one knows, except it was the love of seeing people in trouble, and rejoicing over their misfortunes. Her plans were laid deep and dark, and in almost every instance were successful. The reader will recollect the faded white rose which Agnes threw from the window. As it passed over the head of Mrs. Lafond, who was sitting at the window beneath, and fell upon the ground, a thought struck her, and she rose suddenly and stepping out picked it up, saying as she did so,

through her half compressed lips, "I think I can make this useful," casting a slight glance upward to make sure whether any one saw her or heard the remark. But Agnes was not at the window, and Mrs. Lafond walked back to her room with the faded rose to muse how best she might make it conducive to her purpose in the ruin of her fair friend. At last she be-thought herself of the young man who lived near neighbor, and of whom we have before spoken as attracting the attention of Mr. Alling opposite the window, but to whom Agnes was an entire stranger, and ignorant even of his name. Mrs. Lafond had on two or three occasions, when in company with this young gentleman, discussed the merits of Mrs. Alling, "her beautiful lady friend" as she called her, and spoke at length of her elegance, and refinement, easy and flowing wit, in conversation, and general attractions, not forgetting to mention that she was many years younger than her husband, and that apparently there was no congeniality between them, and on every occasion would be particular to say, "They are just from the Eastern States, what we call 'green' in California; indeed, poor thing, I am afraid some one will coax her away from her husband before long; but whoever gets her will have

a prize ;" and added that she thought he would be much pleased with her if they were acquainted ; also intimating that Agnes had expressed a desire for an introduction. The subject being thus opened to the gentleman, accounts for the look and smile. Mrs. Lafond after looking upon the rose for some time in her room alone, fixed upon her plan, which was to write a note to the young man purporting to be from Mrs. Alling, and enclose the faded flower as a token of her affection ; but said she to herself musingly, " Should anything ever come to light, and the note be exposed, it is in my handwriting, which will implicate me, and that will never do. How I wish I could get her to write it, and pretend it was for me, then of course the name must be signed in the same hand, and she would not sign her own name to it if I told her to," said she laughing to herself, " so that won't do. O, by the way, I remember once having a copy of some poetry which she gave me in her handwriting, I wonder if it is in existence yet. I don't know how good my powers of imitation are, but I will try if I can find it."

After looking for some time among some old papers, she found the aforesaid copy, and exclaimed, with a smile : —

“Here it is! I have it! now I will see what I can do. ‘Nothing risked, nothing won.’”

After a few moments’ practice, being an apt scholar, she succeeded in producing a fac-simile of Mrs. Alling’s hand writing, and then set about penning the note which read as follows:—

“MR. CARLTON:

MY DEAR SIR:—Please excuse the liberty I take in addressing you, a stranger, and yet not a stranger, as I have often heard of you through our worthy landlady, whom I consider almost as my best friend. She has told me of your noble heart, kind and generous disposition, and that you would be a true friend to the unfortunate.

I enclose this rose, somewhat faded, as emblematic of my first young love, blighted and dying, with a heart sighing to be free. I send this message through our mutual friend, Mrs. Lefond.

If you grant me the favor to reply, it will come safely in her care.

Respectfully yours,
A. ALLING.”

The note being written, Mrs. Lefond settled herself back in her easy chair, with a smile of triumph, reading the contents of the paper; then folded it

carefully, saying to herself as she enclosed it in the envelope, —

“ There, I think that will do just for an introduction ; we will see what we shall get in reply.”

Hastily addressing it to Hon. S. B. Carlton, she placed it in her dressing-case until an opportunity should occur to deliver it in person without its passing through second hands. At length the thought struck her of old Bess, the black woman, but she was afraid to send her by daylight ; so waiting until the shades of evening drew its mantle around, she took the note, and going to the kitchen, soon dispatched the greasy old cook to the residence of Mr. Carlton, with strict injunctions of secrecy in the matter, and to deliver the note to no one but himself, under any circumstances whatever. Bess soon returned, grinning, displaying her ivory, and rolling up the white of her eyes, and putting on a consequential air, saying, —

“ All right, missus, all right ! dat dar’s done well.

‘ Mighty fine gemman dat, missus ; s’pose he keep ‘ zette,’ missus ? ”

“ ‘ Zette ! ’ what do you mean, Bess ? ” said Mrs. Lefond, looking around as if fearful some one might overhear the remark.

“ Why ‘ Zettee cordial,’ missus, you knows dat what you promise.”

“ O Bess, go about your work now! don’t let’s hear any more about that. None of your nonsense,” said Mrs. Lefond, as she turned to leave the room.

“ Well, well missus, you ‘members your promise,” said old Bess, hallooing after Mrs. Lefond, as she passed out through the hall, and entering the parlor seated herself at the piano, seeming to forget everything except the performance of her favorite air, “ The Spell is Broken.”

Meantime Mr. and Mrs. Alling remained mostly by themselves, thinking and talking over the past, laying plans for the future, conversing of their beautiful Southern home, and in anticipation of soon meeting their friends in the Atlantic States, little dreaming what was passing in a certain room below stairs.

Mr. Carlton, on receiving the note, hastened to his apartment, and opening it, exclaimed, —

“ By heaven! what is this? A love epistle, I swear! from some one of the fair sex, and here is a token, — a rose! Let’s see who it is from!” and casting his eye at the signature, he started to his feet, exclaiming, “ By Jove! from the lovely Mrs. Al-

ling ! Well let's see what she has to say ! " and running his eye hurriedly over it, repeated to himself, " ' Friend of the unfortunate, and sighs to be free.' What can she mean by that ! what can her misfortune consist in, unless it is in being too pretty ? And as to sighing to be free, I don't know as I can much blame her for that ! freedom from such a crusty old fellow as she has to deal with, from all accounts, must be very sweet ! At any rate she is a splendid woman, and there is no harm in making her acquaintance, now the ice is broken," and taking up his pen he commenced a reply as follows : —

" **MY DEAR MRS. ALLING :—**

Your very kind note was duly received, for which please accept my sincere thanks. I am very glad to hear that I am regarded in the light of a friend, and assure you that I shall be only too happy to contribute to your peace and prosperity, and that any confidence placed in me, shall never be betrayed, but will remain sacred while life exists. I regret very much my inability to see you, for several days, as I am obliged to leave town early in the morning, for the Southern mines, on business of importance ; but on my return shall embrace the first opportunity, and

sincerely hope you will feel no delicacy in granting me an interview.

And believe me to be, in every respect, a gentleman, and sincerely

Your friend,

S. B. CARLTON."

Carefully folding the note and enclosing it in a finely-tinted envelope, he addressed it to Mrs. Alling, care of Mrs. Lafond — saying as he did so, “ I am so sorry that I have to leave town to-morrow ; I’m afraid my bird will be flown before I return, but so it is.” Then summoning a messenger, despatched him with the note to its destination.

The intriguing landlady on receiving it tore it open, and after devouring the contents, placed it in a new envelope addressing it as nearly as possible in the handwriting of Mr. Carleton, then laid it away until circumstances should call it forth ; this being done she felt that she must try if possible, to alienate Agnes and her husband from each other, which she set about doing in her usual artful and winning way.

On the day following the one on which she received the note from Mr. Carlton, as Mr. Alling was absent from the house for a few hours, she

called at their room, and in her usual kind and affable manner, said, "My dear Mrs. Alling, as you do not often call upon me, I thought I would come up and sit with you a little while, now your husband is out, for your time is always so taken up with him, no one gets a chance to look at you when he is here. You must be a very loving couple," added she with a kind of sneering laugh.

"Be seated my dear friend," said Agnes, "I am really glad to see you, I have seen so little of you for a few days past. I don't know that we are any more loving than any one else; but then my husband is rather dejected, and at times melancholy; he doesn't like this country very well. I don't think he'll ever make a good Californian, and when he gets in these moody fits, he always wants me near him. I talk so fast and rattle off so much nonsense. It don't amount to anything anyway, but then it serves to divert his mind from thoughts of home."

"O yes," said Mrs. Lafond, "how much we women have to do to keep these men in good humor, and then we don't get much credit for it after all; it makes me out of patience when I think of it. A lady, an old schoolmate of mine who emigrated to this State with her husband some little time before I

did, and who has passed through all the trials and privations which early Californians were subjected to, left her husband a few days since, and all the female world are up in arms about it. I suppose if she were in the Eastern States she would be scandalized to the last degree; but in California such things are not so much thought of, though there are always a certain class, you know, who catch at everything to scandalize us women; and then what is worse they are always our own sex. I hate such women, I think them the most contemptible creatures on the face of the earth," continued she, watching Mrs. Alling's face to catch its expression, and straightening up in her chair with a very important toss of her head, continued with great emphasis, "I am a woman, and an honorable woman, and I will not hear my sex scandalized without rebuke. If we don't support our own sex I want to know, Mrs. Alling, who is going to do it? Charity covereth a multitude of sins, and we must be charitable towards each other, and I will not believe anything against a woman without the most extreme proofs. I am a friend to women, and the unfortunate will ever find an asylum in my house. Now if you or any other lady of my acquaintance were in trouble you would always find a warm friend in me."

“But,” said Agnes, “what did this lady leave her husband for; did California change him so much that she could not live with him?”

“O, I don’t know, I haven’t heard all the particulars yet; but from what I can learn, he has neglected and abused her in various ways until she could bear it no longer. I did not hear that he ever struck her, but then there are a thousand ways you know that a man can ill treat his wife, without striking her, and we frail creatures are so constituted that we subsist on those little delicate attentions, and kind, endearing words which we have a right to expect from our husbands. It is these little things which make up life, and constitute our happiness.

“Oh, yes,” said Agnes, “I think more of the kind attentions and tender words inadvertently thrown in, than I do of many of greater magnitude, for as my poor old mother used to say, ‘Straws show which way the wind blows.’”

“That is true,” said Mrs. Lafond, “and I don’t see for my part why a woman should stay with her husband all her lifetime and be neglected and abused, dragging out a miserable existence, and perhaps raising a family to be equally unhappy, just for fear of what people will say. But by the way, my dear

Agnes, I don't think you are overburdened with those little delicate attentions we have been speaking of; your husband does not appear to me to be one of that loving kind."

"O I don't know," replied Agnes, "perhaps I have my share," and a sigh unconsciously escaped her lips, which did not pass unnoticed by Mrs. Lefond.

"But how is this, I understand that you and Mr. Alling are going to the States. Not soon I hope?"

"Well — yes — I hope so. I don't know that I much like this country, though I have as yet seen but a small part of it, and my husband seems pining for his home."

"And is it to his home you go, in the sunny South? Have you ever been there?" said Mrs. Lafond.

"No," replied Agnes; "we had only been married six months when we came out here, and it being very hot weather, I preferred remaining at the North. We should have gone South in the winter if we had not decided to come here."

"Then you have never been to his home," said Mrs. Lefond, with a quizzical look. "Are you sure he is as wealthy as he is reputed to be? Perhaps when you get there you will find his large plantation and slaves belong to some one else, and you be obliged

to work for your living ; you can't tell much by what you hear these days. I should want to be sure that I was going to be provided for when I got there ; otherwise, if I were young and talented as you are, I would never leave this country where there are such facilities for making a fortune."

"I don't know," said Agnes, "whether he is so immensely wealthy, but I think he has sufficient for all our necessaries and luxuries ; at any rate, I am not at all afraid of want."

"Well, perhaps not," said Mrs. Lefond, bursting into a loud laugh ; "but if I were young and beautiful as you are, I should want something more than necessaries of life, or luxuries either, to induce me to marry a man so different in looks, disposition, age, and everything else, as he is from you. Why, I'd sooner take him to be your father than your husband. Upon my word, Agnes, he is not at all such a man as you ought to have ; besides he does not appreciate you. It is too bad for you to be as the song says, wasting your sweetness on the desert air. Now you take my advice. I am an honorable woman, and would never advise any one to do wrong in any respect, nor countenance anything wrong ; but I like to see every one in their right position, and when I see a lady out of her sphere, where she is not

appreciated at all, and throwing away the best part of her life on one who does not seem to know her worth, I feel as if I could not rest. Now I tell you, let him go home if he wishes to, and you remain with me. I will be your best friend, and I assure you you can easily get a divorce in this State, and marry some one who is worthy of you."

Here Agnes interrupted her by saying the conversation was anything but agreeable; that she had never thought of such a thing, and she should not leave her husband while in California; that whenever he thought best to go to the States, she should accompany him.

Just at this moment a gentle knock, and the woolly head of Bess protruding in at the door, interrupted the conversation.

"O missus, me so firstly, wants some dat dar Anisette."

"Hush!" said Mrs. Lefond, arising from her chair; and excusing herself, she followed Bess from the room.

"What is the matter with you, Bess?"

"O missus, been ironing all day, work hard, so berry warm, neber want 'zette' more nor dis time."

"Well, well, go to the kitchen. We'll see, we'll see," said Mrs. Lefond.

CHAPTER IV.

WE will here give the reader a little information concerning the Anisette which Bess was so anxious for.

Among the occupants of this establishment was a gentleman by the name of Butler, a wholesale dealer in fine wines and liquors, in the lower part of the city. He had been an inmate of this house from its first opening, was one of Mrs. Lefond's warmest friends, had often advanced her considerable sums of money when her liabilities were greater than she could well manage at the time, and in various ways had rendered her valuable assistance. He was a middle-aged man, without family; had been very successful in business, and was rapidly making a fortune. In his room he always kept a few bottles of his choicest wines, of which he sometimes partook for his stomach's sake, and occasionally with a few of his friends rejoiced over successful trade or new-

laid schemes in business, with a few bottles of "Sparkling Hock," or his favorite Anisette cordial. At the time of the above conversation, Mr. Butler was absent for a day or two in Sacramento.

Bess was a kind of uncertain individual, black as ebony, fat and greasy, weighing about three hundred pounds, more or less. Her age we could not discover; suffice it to say she was somewhere between twenty-five and forty, and at this time in rather delicate circumstances. In some way or other, at some time or other, she had tasted the Anisette cordial, and it had made an impression on her mental or physical system never to be forgotten; and her thoughts often wandered to the bottle of Anisette, with a longing desire for another draught.

We must here introduce another character, in order to give the reader a good account of the transaction.

There had been stopping also, at this house, for several weeks, a gentleman and wife by the name of Brown. Failing to find business such as he wished to engage in, Mr. Brown left San Francisco to prospect, as Californians say, in San Jose, leaving his wife at the boarding-house until he was locat-

ed and should send for her. This lady was not very prepossessing in appearance, but prided herself on having sufficient strength of mind to be able to counteract any evil influences which should be brought to bear against her. On her, Mrs. Lefond practised her wily arts, but thus far to no purpose, and becoming out of patience at her ill success, and thinking she had not sufficient attractions to pay for spending too much time on her, she concluded to let her go.

But now an opportunity occurred which Mrs. Lefond thought too good to lose, by which she might play off a trick on Mr. Butler, although one of her best friends, and cast shame and disgrace on Mrs. Brown, who was summoned to join her husband in San Jose, and who consequently would not be there to defend herself against the assault.

When Mrs. Lefond had dispatched Bess to the kitchen, she went directly to Mr. Butler's room, thinking if she could get access to the cordial without too much trouble, she would give Bess the long-promised Anisette. After examining two or three bottles upon the table, she found one which had been uncorked and sampled. She held it up to the light and shook it gently to ascertain the color and

quantity of its contents, then descended the stairs and proceeded to the kitchen, where she found Bess sitting as gruff as a bear and growling to herself from behind her teeth, something which no one could or cared to understand. At sight of the bottle, a grin passed over her ebony features, and she burst into a deep, hoarse laugh, resembling the discharge of a volley of musketry. Rolling her eyes about, and smacking her lips she exclaimed, —

“ Zette come at last ! I thought missus gib it to me sometime.”

“ Yes, yes,” said Mrs. Lefond, pettishly ; “ here’s your ‘ Zette,’ as you call it. Now drink to your heart’s content ! ” and then laughing, continued, “ but Bess, you must drink your missus’ health ; you musn’t forget your missus. You’ll never get such a missus again.”

“ Bess knows dat berry well ; neber spects to,” said the old wench, smacking her lips after draining the first glass ; another and another glass, and the bottle was finished, Bess declaring herself satisfied at the result.

Mrs. Lefond now set herself to work to carry out what she called a good practical joke on Mr. Butler, but which she managed to do in such a manner as

to entirely hide her hand in the matter, and throw the blame upon the innocent Mrs. Brown, who was to leave on the following day for San Jose, and which she said would just make it right for the time she had spent on her.

The bottle was therefore prepared, partly filled with water, beside a little of the Anisette which remained, and into which she emptied almost the entire contents of the table castor,—black and cayenne pepper, vinegar, mustard, a small quantity of oil, catsup, and Worcestershire sauce, to which she added syrup of rhubarb, pain-killer, and ipecac, which, being nicely sweetened with molasses, and well mixed by shaking, she placed it upon the table in Mr. Butler's room, in about the same position that she had found it. This being done, she set about preparing something which would point to the perpetrator of the deed. Taking a slip of paper, she seated herself at the table, and with her pencil scratched off, in a disguised hand, the following lines:—

Mr. Butler, pray do not fret,
I drank up all your Anisette;
To-morrow I go to San Jose,
Do not be angry sir, I pray.

And if in time you chance to go
To San Jose, a day or so,
Just call on me and you will find,
To treat you well I am inclined. Adieu.

After finishing this *sublime effusion*, she threw it upon the back of the table carelessly, among a number of other papers, and left the room, thinking that she had thus far done her work well. A day or two after this event transpired, Mr. Butler returned. In the meantime Mrs. Lefond occasionally visited the room to shake the bottle and see that the contents were well mixed.

The Sacramento boat was very late on the night in question, on account of the ebbing tide leaving them high and dry on the "Hog's back," which made it near the hour of twelve when Mr. Butler entered the house, sweating and panting with his hasty walk up the hill. Covered with dust, and famished with thirst, he hastened to his room, seized the bottle of Anisette cordial, thinking a draught would allay his thirst and strengthen his drooping spirits. He drew the cork, and placing it to his lips, drank as long as it was possible to hold his breath. When at length he could no longer swallow, he hurriedly placed the bottle on the table,

catching the first taste of the vile compound. As soon as he recovered his breath, he cried, —

“ Murder ! murder ! I’m poisoned ! I’m poisoned ! Help ! help ! murder ! fire ! ”

The consternation consequent upon this alarm in the dead hour of night, as it awoke the inmates of that dwelling from their slumbers, can be better imagined than described. The whole house, male and female, rushed frantically to the room from whence the sounds proceeded, and among the rest, our *honorable landlady*, seemingly paled with fright, holding a light above her head, and screaming, —

“ What is the matter ? Oh, Mr. Butler, what is the matter ? ” and seeing the poor man with features distorted, writhing and groaning, ran hither and thither, crying, “ Some one go for the doctor ! oh, Mr. Butler ! some one go for the doctor, quick ! the poor man will die ! ”

The doctor was hastily summoned, and being told that some one was about dying from the effects of poison, brought his stomach pump, which was soon applied, ejecting the villainous stuff, which partly relieved the suffering man.

The next business of the physician was to examine the contents of the bottle, which being analyzed,

was found to contain no poison, nor any deadly drug, but a scandalous, unpalatable, highly flavored compound, which might produce unpleasant results.

The madam remained by the bedside of the suffering man, anxiously inquiring what she could do to alleviate his distress, bringing extra pillows and blankets, making mustard draughts for his feet and stomach, administering to his wants, and in every possible way seemingly doing all she could to contribute to his comfort, but at intervals would repair to the kitchen and laugh until the tears trickled down her cheeks.

Morning dawned. The physician on taking leave of his patient, not very gently intimated that the bill for his night's services would be fifty dollars, which being duly paid, he was about to leave the room when the lady called to him and inquired if he did not wish to leave some medicine for his patient, as he appeared to be in a very weak condition. He turned back, saying he would write a recipe for some powders which would give tone to his stomach after the severe struggle through which it had passed, and which he thought was all he needed. Mrs. Lefond, in searching the table over to find a piece of paper whereon the prescription might be

written, designedly, though apparently by accident, picked up the verses which she had written a day or two previous.

“Here is a piece of paper!” then taking a second look as if something had suddenly caught her eye, continued, “but there is writing on it;” and stopping a moment as if reading to herself, exclaimed, “Ah! here is an explanation to the affair! This tells who did the deed! Our worthy Mrs. Brown; our *upright, noble, and virtuous*, Mrs. Brown is the one you are indebted to, Mr. Butler, for all this,” at the same time handing the paper to the physician who read it aloud.

“What a scandalous woman!” exclaimed Mrs. Le-fond, “to treat any one in such a manner, and one, too, who has never injured her in the least! With all her pretensions, I did not think her any better than she should be, yet I should never have thought she would stoop to such an act. Had I known her to be so base, I would have discarded her long ago, for I am an honorable woman, and though a warm and ardent friend of my sex, I would never countenance anything so villainous, and if I were you, Mr. Butler, I would have redress sooner or later.”

Mrs. Brown was now regarded by all the inmates

of that house as the guilty party, while she, wholly innocent of what was transpiring in San Francisco, was quietly enjoying herself with her husband in the beautiful San Jose valley.

Time passed on. Mr. Butler recovered, and as a token of his gratitude to Mrs. Lefond for her kindness during his illness, begged she would accept the trifling sum of fifty dollars, which she *very modestly* did. Several days now elapsed in which nothing occurred worthy of note either to our heroine or any member of that household, Mrs. Lefond waiting for a good opportunity to commence her attacks upon Mrs. Alling.

One bright and beautiful afternoon, which was unusual in San Francisco in the summer season, Agnes found it necessary to go down town in order to make a few purchases. She scarcely ever went out except when attended by her husband, but Mr. Alling, like most men of his temperament, disliked shopping, and on this occasion excused himself, telling her that he would go anywhere else with her, but this shopping business he could not endure. Agnes, with a laughing "good-by" to her husband and Mrs. Lefond, who were standing in the door, tripped down the steps and through the beautiful

garden with its labyrinth of flowers, out into the street, and with her hand waving adieu was soon lost to sight.

“Beautiful creature, that wife of yours!” said Mrs. Lefond. “I think she is the most perfect lady I have ever met in California.”

Mr. Alling straightened himself up, and with a curl of the lip and a smile of pride, replied —

“Well, she’ll do; I reckon she is about as good as any of them.”

“About as good as any of them!” reiterated Mrs. Lefond. “Why, she has the most perfect hand I ever saw. I was asking her the other day to go and have it cast in plaster for me. But — by the way, Mr. Alling, how dare you bring her out here? She is by far too pretty and winning for this place. Beautiful ladies are scarce, and great inducements are sometimes held out to them. If you are not careful some one may coax her away from you,” continued she, studiously watching his face to see how that remark suited him.

“No fears of that,” said Mr. Alling, “though I am not able at present to give her everything she would like to have; but maybe the time will come when I can do so. No fears of her leaving me,” he

repeated, with an uneasy motion about the mouth that showed he thought within himself there was some danger of it, but did not wish others to think he suspected it.

This movement of the muscles did not escape the notice of our landlady, and taking courage at the embarrassment he exhibited, she went on to say —

“ ‘ Where ignorance is bliss, ’tis folly to be wise,’ but I think, in many instances, if we could see the danger, it might be avoided.”

“ I believe that is often so,” said Mr. Allen, “ but in my case I do not think there is any danger either to be seen or avoided. Agnes is a good girl, and I think is much attached to me.”

“ How differently we should feel towards each other,” responded Mrs. Lefond, “ if we could see the heart. Perhaps it is well we cannot, for we should oftentimes be very unhappy. We are poor, short-sighted mortals, and cannot see what is in the mind of others. She is attached to you from force of circumstances. Were she differently situated, perhaps you would not find her quite so devoted.”

Stopping suddenly, she muttered to herself —

“ Why ! what am I doing ? I’d like to have told it all before I thought ! ”

This was apparently not intended for Mr. Alling's ears, but he caught the last remark, and said —

“What do you mean? Told what?”

“Oh, nothing, nothing,” replied Mrs. Lefond, as if she wished to change the subject, but in reality only hoping he would urge her to say more, as in that case he could not blame her if she did so.

“But just look, Mr. Alling; isn't that an exquisite rose on that bush yonder? It is a new variety of what they call the ‘cloth of gold.’ Flowers grow very luxuriantly in this climate.”

“It's very pretty,” responded Mr. Alling; “but that isn't the subject in question. I wish to know what you mean to insinuate by saying ‘you liked to have told it all without thinking.’ What is the all you speak of?”

“It is nothing, nothing at all,” replied Mrs. Lefond; “I was only thinking aloud.”

“Yes, it is something,” said he; “you certainly meant something. I insist on knowing what it is.”

Mrs. Lefond looked up with one of her winning smiles, and encountering the piercing glance of Mr. Alling's keen black eye, immediately dropped her head, and with a quivering lip, assumed for the occasion, said softly —

"I am afraid to tell you what I mean. I fear you will be angry."

"I reckon not," he replied, moved with pity at her emotion.

"But then," she continued, "I am an honorable woman, and I feel it my duty to expose the guilty."

"Guilty!" repeated Mr. Alling, angrily. "I don't believe it."

"There, there, I thought you were not going to get angry."

"Well, go on," he replied. "Let's know what you mean. There's no use getting angry at a woman, I suppose. They say everything they don't mean."

"They say some things they do mean sometimes," said Mrs. Lefond, with a half-sarcastic grin. "But really, now, Mr. Alling, I feel it my duty as an honorable woman, to tell you what I know of a plot which is going on between your wife and another party, but you must first promise you will not be angry at me, for there is an old saying, 'that the first tellers of unwelcome news have but a losing office;' and then again you must promise upon your honor as a gentleman;" casting a sidelong glance at him, "and as a Southerner, entire secrecy; that you will in no way, by look, word, or deed,

betray me, but that what I say to you shall be held sacred."

"I don't know," Mr. Alling replied; "that depends much on what it is; if it is of the nature that you intimate, it may be necessary for me to mention it."

"Well," she responded, "if you will not promise secrecy, I can do nothing to aid you;" and changing her base of operations, she commenced flattering his vanity by saying "that she would not take the promise of many people in such a matter, as it was a serious thing, but that she well knew the noble and chivalrous spirit of the South, that when their word is given, it is regarded by them as an oath equally binding; consequently I know if you promise me I am safe, and depend upon it, what I am going to say is of the utmost importance to yourself. A few days longer, and it may be too late to do you any good."

"Well, I promise; go on."

"You promise, you swear eternal silence, that not one word shall escape your lips, and you can depend on me as your friend. In any way I can assist you, by information or otherwise, I am yours to command. And now, to show you," she contin-

ued, “that you were about to be made the dupe of a cunning plot, I will introduce to you a new character,” then going to her room, she soon returned, bringing a sealed letter. “Here,” said she, “is a little bit of a love note to your lady, and as it came in my care, knowing it to be the answer to one which she had sent, I hesitated whether to give it to her or you. Upon reflection, I decided that it would be wrong in me to allow a gentleman to be so basely deceived when it was in my power to prevent it; so I detained the note, waiting for an opportunity to call your attention to it.”

Mr. Allen hurriedly tore it open, and ran his eye hastily over the contents. Turning ashy pale, he threw it down, and stamping with rage upon it, exclaimed, —

“D—n that Carlton! Who in h—l is he?” and in the same breath, added, “Excuse me, madam, I did not mean to speak rashly in presence of a lady,” then picking up the paper and reading it over again as if to make sure his eyes did not deceive him, tore it into atoms.

“There,” said Mrs. Lefond, with a triumphant smile, “now you believe, don’t you, that there is some truth in what I have said; but remember, you

must not betray me. You must be calm and show no signs of perturbation when Mrs. Alling comes home. If you do that will lead them to be more cautious, and we may not be able to find out their proceedings."

"Did you say this was in answer to one written by my wife?"

"Most assuredly!" she replied, "and she not only sent the note, but enclosed a white rose as a token of her affection; you recollect the one she was cherishing so fondly in a vase by itself, some time ago?"

"Yes, yes, I remember now. I shall never forget it, for with that rose are associated my first feelings of distrust. While Mrs. Alling was admiring it, a gentleman from a window in the adjoining yard, looked over and smiled. I thought he was looking at her. Could that be the veritable scoundrel who is the author of this note which you say is in reply to hers, and which I suppose is still in his possession?" and after a momentary pause, muttered to himself, "D---n it! I wish I could get hold of that note."

"That is the man," she replied, "and now you believe she wrote one, don't you? You have the

answer to it, but if you doubt it, I think perhaps I may manage to get it.

Here the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of a third party, when Mr. Alling withdrew.

CHAPTER V.

WHEN Mrs. Alling returned to her home, she found her husband sullen and morose, sitting by himself, with his hat drawn over his eyes, twirling his fingers and occasionally muttering some incoherent words, seeming lost to everything around him, and did not even notice her approach, or know that she had entered the room until she came up beside him. Placing her hand on his shoulder, and raising his hat from his brow, she looked earnestly into his face, and with a merry laugh, exclaimed,—

“ Why, pet, what’s the matter? you look frightened. Were you asleep, and dreaming? or have you been taking another trip, in imagination, to your Southern home? ”

Mr. Alling started to his feet, and throwing his hands about like a mad man, snapped out,—

“ Go away! don’t make a fool of yourself! You are always talking foolery and nonsense.’

"Why, what is the matter?" said Agnes, stepping before him as he started for the door. "What has happened since I have been gone to disturb your peace of mind? I hope you have not had bad news."

Mrs. Alling was more beautiful than ever this afternoon. The walk and the exertion of climbing the hill had heightened the color on her cheeks, and added freshness and vivacity to her spirits, which, with her becoming dress and hat, made her the perfection of loveliness. But to her husband, while she was standing between him and the door, to prevent his leaving the room until an explanation should be made, in his state of mind, his suspicions aroused, and the green eyed-monster, Jealousy, looming up before him, she looked anything but pretty; more like a thing to be despised and hated, than to be loved and cherished. And rushing by her, muttering something between his teeth, he hurried out, and passing down the stairs, was soon in the street.

Agnes was amazed. Everything in her shopping arrangements had gone merry as a marriage bell, and she came home light-hearted and joyous to show her husband the many little purchases she had made, most of them designed as presents to their Eastern

friends on their return home ; and to laugh over the ludicrous scenes she had witnessed along the streets and in the various shops, for at that early day in San Francisco, there was no lack of ridiculous amusements, which forced themselves upon the notice even of passers-by, in any section of the city, and especially in that portion of the city called "Chinadom."

Mrs. Alling had been very much amused, for on her way to Stockton Street, to cut short the distance, or avoid climbing so steep a hill, she had passed up a street with which she was unacquainted, and which was settled almost entirely by Chinese ; and in passing, without thinking where she was, had almost stopped in front of a row of low, wooden shanties, to witness the performance going on within. Here was a group of men seated around a table, eating rice with chopsticks ; and there, peeping out through a small, grated window, without glass, were two or three moon-eyed celestials, whose daubed faces and black hair, gummed and shiny, ornamented with glass trinkets of various colors and sizes, showed them to be females ; and a little further on, an old gray-bearded man was sitting in state playing mandarin, with a score or less of attendants to do his bidding.

Many were the amusing scenes which presented themselves to her as she wended her way homeward, expecting to have a good laugh in recounting them to her husband.

The reader already knows the reception she met with. Mr. Alling had for some time been more than usually thoughtful and dejected, owing in part to a constitutional habit, but mostly from disappointments in financial affairs. Failing to accomplish the object which brought him to California; without means to engage in speculations of any kind, which was the only thing he seemed fitted for; without a business education, having always lived in the Southern States, where he had been acknowledged as master from his earliest infancy; and now finding himself in a new country, a land of equality, toils, and privations, with no certainty of being able soon to return to his home, where he could again enjoy those luxuries to which he had been accustomed from his earliest childhood, he grew gradually from day to day more sullen and moody, and would sit for hours together twirling his fingers and muttering to himself without noticing Agnes, except she spoke to him, when he would answer her in a gruff, snappy tone, and immediately leave the room, angry at being dis-

turbed in his revery. In this state of mind he was a fit subject for the wily arts of Mrs. Lefond, who had succeeded in adding suspicion and jealousy to his former troubles. High-tempered and impulsive, whatever was done by him was done quickly.

Late in the evening, Mr. Alling, in a state of beastly intoxication, was assisted home by two persons who said they had picked him up in the street. Never had he appeared in such a condition before. He had, no doubt, always been accustomed to taking a social glass, but now he was entirely lost to consciousness. Where he had been no one knew, or how he became so terribly inebriated.

He was confined to his bed nearly a week, during which time he said but little, and kept his secret well. Day after day, at every convenient opportunity, Mrs. Lefond was plying Mrs. Alling with arguments to induce her to discard her husband entirely.

At length he recovered and again absented himself for a short time, to take the air, as Agnes urged him to do, telling him it would do him good. Mrs. Lefond again made her appearance, saying —

“ So the old gent’s gone out for a walk, has he? I should think he would want to take an airing after

such a time. What a foolish woman you are. I declare you are more self-sacrificing than any one I ever saw, to throw away the best part of your life on such an old tyrant, in a country like this. Why don't you get a divorce and let him go? You see he is growing worse and worse every day; he will never be any good to you. Now I will tell you what I will do. I am going to send for my lawyer to come up and attend to a little matter of business for me, and I will introduce him to you; also state your case to him, and he will get a divorce for you, and wait your convenience for his pay. You can talk to him. You will find him honorable, and a gentleman in every respect."

Agnes replied that she did not wish to see any lawyer, and if she did she could select one for herself; that she felt in no humor for talking, and hoped she would say nothing farther on the subject.

"Well," said Mrs. Lafond, "do as you think best. I am only speaking for your good. As I have often told you, I am your friend, and I think you will find it to be so some day."

After a few more common-place remarks, Mrs. Lafond withdrew, leaving Agnes to her own reflections.

That evening our landlady found occasion to inform Mr. Alling that his wife had requested an interview with her lawyer in regard to a divorce, and that he was coming to the house the next afternoon to see her; and added, "if you will appear to be absent, and yet happen around just in time, you can witness the interview."

"O, I can't believe that," replied Mr. Alling, in a half-tremulous voice, which almost gave the lie to his words. "Agnes has faults, undoubtedly, but I can't believe she would do that."

"Well," responded Mrs. Lafond, "you cannot say that I haven't warned you in time. You can see for yourself if you choose, when the time comes. To-morrow at two he is to be here."

Mr. Alling turned and walked out into the piazza, and seating himself in a shady corner, out of sight of any one, began to reflect. "Can it be possible," thought he, "that my wife can be playing a game like this? I do not believe it." And then he thought of the reasonableness of Mrs. Lafond's statements, of the letter he had seen, and various little items which in his naturally jealous mind he had magnified until they appeared to him enormities, forebodings of some terrible evil. He did not wish to believe

what Mrs. Lafond had told him, yet thought circumstantial evidence forced him to do so. "I don't know why I should credit what this woman says about my wife. I certainly ought to know her better than she does." But then the thought came back to him that whatever Mrs. Lafond had told him thus far, she had been able to prove. At any rate, thought he, I will be round in time for this interview to-morrow. He had sat for a long time in deep silence, and apparently unconscious ; at length, starting a little from his stupor, he spoke aloud :—

"Am I dreaming, or is this reality ?"

"Oh, is that you, Dan ? is there where you are ?" said Agnes, attracted by the sound of his voice. "I began to be frightened at your absence, and have been looking everywhere for you. What were you talking about ? dreaming about what ? Home I suppose, as usual," said she, laughing ; and taking hold of his hand commenced pulling him in a playful manner, saying, "Come along here ! you are my prisoner, and must go with me. I cannot have you at large any longer. You are a prisoner, but not without hope ; better a willing one, too," she added, as he allowed her to lead him into the house.

Early on the following afternoon, old Bess was despatched to Mrs. Alling to say that her mistress was taken suddenly in a fainting fit. Having partially recovered, yet with a severe headache, she wished her to sit awhile with her.

Agnes, ever ready to alleviate the woes of others, went immediately to Mrs. Lafond's room, whom she found lying on the lounge, and to all appearance, suffering intensely.

"Come, my dear," said Mrs. Lafond, "sit down by my side and talk; your prattling tongue will make me forget my pain."

"I am sorry you are ill," said Agnes. "I hope you will be better soon."

"These fainting spells are periodical, and I always come out of them with a severe headache," responded she; "but they do not last long. I will be better soon, only talk to me; tell me something."

Mrs. Alling kept up a spirited conversation on general subjects, for a half hour or so, when the door bell rang and Mr. Stuart, the lawyer, was announced.

"Oh dear! what shall I do?" said Mrs. Lafond. "I must take a little time to arrange my toilet, and

perhaps he is in a hurry and will get out of patience waiting. Pray, Mrs. Alling go in and entertain him a few moments."

"Oh no!" said Agnes, "I don't know him; how shall I entertain him?"

"Yes, come! say to him that I am ill, but will be with him presently. No matter if you don't know him; we don't stand on etiquette so much in California. Go! that's a good girl. I will be in soon," responded Mrs. Lafond.

Agnes reluctantly entered the parlor, informed Mr. Stuart, who rose and bowed, that Mrs. Lafond had been quite ill for an hour or two, but would be with him presently; and seating herself by an open window, was soon engaged in pleasant conversation.

Some time elapsed before the lady in question made her appearance, which seemed to Agnes almost an age. Scarcely had she taken her seat after the compliments of the day were gone through with, than Mr. Alling entered the hall, passed by the open parlor door, in front of which he almost stopped, and casting a withering look at his wife, slowly mounted the stairs which led to their room. Agnes excused herself from the company, and immediately followed him.

“ What in h—ll were you doing, in there with that man ? ” said he, as she entered the room, his eyes flashing fire, and stamping his feet with rage. “ I’ll show you, madam, that I will find you out in all your tricks. You can’t do anything without my knowing it, and there is no use to try.”

Agnes soon related the circumstances of the case, and declared she had no acquaintance whatever with the gentleman, or knew anything about him only that he called to see the landlady, and that she had gone in at her request, to entertain him until she could make her appearance. But all she could say was to no purpose. To Mr. Alling’s mind, everything was clear. The interview was only the fulfilment of what Mrs. Lafond had told him, and he doubted not that everything else would prove equally true. He was in a perfect frenzy ; raved, stamped, and swore from that time until nearly morning, when he fell asleep, and on awaking did not care to renew the subject, but sat moody and silent.

Mrs. Lafond saw her plans working well, and concluded that with a little more artful manœuvring her purpose would be accomplished. With all her other propensities, she was not a stranger to envy. Having, during her intimacy with Mrs. Alling, as-

certained that she had a valuable wardrobe, consisting in part, of under garments of superbly wrought linen of various patterns, which had been made for her in New York before her departure for the Eureka State, many of which had never been worn, but were carefully packed in a trunk by themselves ; she thought what a valuable acquisition it would be to her wardrobe if she could get them into her possession, they were so exquisite. But then, Mrs. Alling did not wish to sell them, so she must try some other plan to get them, and she set about making arrangements to accomplish her purpose.

A few days passed quietly and peacefully ; Mr. Alling seemed to have forgotten past occurrences, and Agnes was as usual lively and spirited, when, one day, Mrs. Lafond knocking, entered their room, which appeared to be the signal for Mr. Alling to withdraw ; saying, "he never cared to hear ladies talk, that they always had some little matters to discuss which did not interest him, and he would just take a little walk out," — not appearing to suspect any intrigue.

When he was out of hearing, Mrs. Lafond commenced as follows : —

" It is unnecessary for me to tell you, I have told

you so often before and you don't believe me, that I am your friend ; but whether you believe me or not, you will find it to be so, sooner or later, and perhaps when it is too late. I have something now to tell you for your own good. I hope you will heed what I say, and swear to me solemnly, as you hope for heaven, that you will never, never intimate to a living soul what I am going to communicate.

Agnes replied,—

“ I do not like to put myself under oath, or swear to anything until I know what it is ; however, I will promise not to tell that it came from you.”

“ But you must not tell at all. It is something you will thank me for some day.”

“ I promise,” said Agnes.

“ Well then, responded Mrs. Lafond, “ do you know your husband is jealous of you ?”

“ Jealous of me? no !” replied Agnes, “ nor I never thought so until the other day, he manifested something of the kind when I was talking with Mr. Stuart, you know.”

“ Yes, I think he did,” said the other, “ and I wondered whether he was jealous or not ; and I found it was really so by a remark, dropped casually in conversation. I drew him out a little to see what

I could learn in the matter for your benefit, for forewarned you know, is forearmed, and I found out things that would startle you."

" Well, perhaps not," said Agnes, with her usual coolness ; " but what was it."

" Well for one thing, I learned that he intends to go to the States, and he does not intend to take you either, at least if he takes you as far as New York, which I don't believe he will, he will never take you to his home in Virginia, he thinks you are not aristocratic enough, a plebeian, and his Southern friends would not acknowledge you as their equal ; he intends to get along as quietly as possible while he is obliged to remain here, and as soon as he receives remittances from home, he will be off some fine morning and leave you without a dollar."

" And how did you find all that out," said Agnes, " did he tell you?"

" No, not in so many words ; but from what he said, I inferred it," replied the other, " and another thing, he calculates to sell all those fine clothes of yours before he leaves, as if leaving you without money were not enough."

" He may not get the chance," replied Agnes ; for according to present indications, I may be obliged to

dispose of them first, unless he gets his remittance soon."

" Well, depend upon it he will do it, before you think of it too, and you will never have any good of them or the money either, unless you put them out of the way. Now I tell you what to do ; you take all those articles which you have not worn, and bring them down to my room. You can have two of my bureau drawers to put them in, lock them up and keep the key yourself, then they are safe and will remain so until you wish to take them away, leave the empty trunk standing where it is, if you move that he will miss it, but if he should miss the things by going to the trunk for anything, don't for the world let him know that they are in my possession, for he would think me in collusion with you and plotting against him."

Agnes sat quietly for a few moments without speaking, seeming at a loss to know whether to believe what she had just heard, whether she was going to be robbed and deserted by her husband, or whether Mrs. Lafond was out of her mind, hardly knowing what to think, she concluded that she might as well trust him as her ; for she had began to suspect that Mrs. Lafond's extreme kindness and

solicitude for her welfare, did not emanate altogether from the purest motives. It was too much good, and she replied —

“ Well, I think I'll let them remain where they are for the present; at least I'm not afraid of his taking them away without I go too.”

“ Well,” replied the other, “ you continue to think so, you will find out and wish you had taken my advice, but that will be too late; but there comes Mr. Alling, I must go. I do not wish him to think we have been gossiping all this time; for men are so queer you know, they always think women are scandalizing somebody, if they are together long and many married men think their wives are telling their secrets, so I'll go before he gets in; mind don't lisp a word of what I've said, and with that, she closed the door after her; meeting Mr. Alling in the lower hall, she looked around to make sure that no one saw them, and placing her hand to one side of her mouth, whispered —

“ Arrange matters so I can see you to-morrow, I have something of great importance to communicate. I have learned something to-day which is of the utmost consequence to you. Can't you get her out for a walk, or on some errand? ”

“I will see you late in the afternoon,” he replied.

“That will do; all right,” she ejaculated, and passed on to the kitchen to look after the old cook.

Late that night Mr. Carlton returned; his first business when he came in sight of the boarding-house was to look for the light in Mrs. Alling’s room, and see if by any possibility he might catch a glimpse of his new friend. Before retiring that night, he ascertained that Mr. Alling and his wife were still inmates of the boarding-house, and penned a note to her appointing an interview, which was sent as the previous one in care of Mrs. Lafond, who had been anxiously awaiting his return expecting a scene when the aforesaid interview should take place. Her eyes sparkled with triumph, and her countenance lighted up with a strange glow, as she carefully cut the envelope and read as follows: —

“MY DEAR FRIEND —

Having just returned from a tedious trip through a portion of the Southern mines, though much fatigued, and in want of sleep, I cannot rest until I acquaint you of my arrival, trusting that you will be pleased to know that I am safely back in San Francisco.

Although I have not been long absent, the wheels of time moved so slowly when thinking of you, that it seemed to me an age.

I am dying to see you, but do not know when or where that happy meeting will take place.

If you will allow me to suggest, my dear friend, I would say to-morrow evening ; and as it may not be an easy matter for you to wander far from the house without suspicion, I would say in the western part of the garden near the vine-covered arbor, as an entrance can be effected from the alley-way.

If this suits your convenience, meet me there at precisely nine. Do not fail, as I shall count the moments until the time arrives, and

Believe me, devotedly and sincerely, yours

S. B. CARLTON."

Having finished the reading, she carefully folded the note and placing it in an envelope sealed and addressed it as before, deposited it in her dressing-case awaiting her interview with Mr. Alling. On the following day she was more anxious than ever, and reminded the gentleman by various nods and gestures of the promised meeting. Mrs. Alling complained of a severe headache, and her husband insisted that she should take a little sleep after dinner, that it would quiet her nerves from which he thought it proceeded, and in the meantime he would go out a little. Agnes obeyed his injunctions, and

when he saw her on the bed snugly covered up, he descended the stairs where he found Mrs. Lafond waiting to receive him.

“Where is Mrs. Alling?” said she; come in, come in and shut the door quick! Tell me where is your wife?”

“Oh, she is snug in bed, and asleep I suppose, by this time,” he rejoined.

“Then sit down, and don’t make any noise;” for by this time she thought she had ingratiated herself into the confidence of both Mr. and Mrs. Alling, and now she felt the utmost caution necessary to prevent a collision before her purpose was accomplished, as she feared lest Agnes might, at any time, betray her, as she did not enter into her plans, or appreciate her friendship as readily as she could wish. So drawing a chair close to his side she said, —

“After what you saw the other day, what do you think of me? Do you believe what I tell you? Did I not tell you that she had sent for my lawyer in reference to a divorce? I suppose you did not believe it then, but you found it to be so, did you not? You saw them talking together, and what else could they talk about, strangers as they were?”

“ Well, well, I don’t wish to hear anything about that now ! It has gone and let it pass,” he replied, nervously. “ Is that all you have to say ? ”

“ No ; your wife has made a confidant of me, and told me all her plans. Of course I promised to keep her secret,” said she, looking up, very wisely. “ I did so, you know, just to find out her movements ; but being an honorable woman, as I profess to be, I could not keep it from you. As her husband, you ought to know it. She intends to get a divorce from you quietly, and before you are aware, — you know divorces are easily granted in this State now, — and leave you for parts unknown, taking all the money and valuables she can get.”

“ How do you know that is her intention ? ”

“ She confessed it to me,” said Mrs. Lafond ; “ and also told me that she should dispose of all her fine clothes to raise money, and would go so far away that you should never find her.”

“ Is it possible ? ”

“ Yes, it is possible. I tell you, Mr. Alling, you don’t know anything about the cunning of that woman ; but if I were you, she should not have them to sell. I would dispose of them myself ; she should not have the money to run away from me

with; if she went she should go without money or clothes either," said the intriguing woman.

"Oh, I reckon Agnes isn't so bad as that," though he had almost began to think it might be so, as the resnlt will show. But he wished to conceal his fears so as to be considered independent in thought and action, and whatever course he might pursue, it would seemingly be dictated by his own judgment, and not by advice from another.

"And something else I have to say, perhaps it may lead to serious consequences, but I feel it my duty to say there is a sweet meeting to be held this evening, by appointment, between your lady and Mr. Carlton. It takes place in the garden near the rose arbor, at precisely nine o'clock. You can make a third party if you choose."

"D—n it!" ejaculated Mr. Alling. "What will come next?"

"I have no more to say," she replied.

"I should think that was enough," he said, and they separated, one to ponder over the matter, and the other to contrive how she could get Agnes into the garden at that time.

Early in the evening, Mrs. Lafond sent a pressing invitation for Mrs. Alling to come down to the par-

lor and engage in singing a favorite air. Agnes declined. She really did not feel in a mood for singing, but Mrs. Lafond urged the matter, saying they had not sung together for a long time, and she must not refuse her now.

“Come,” said Agnes, holding out her hand to her husband; “come, let’s go to the parlor and have a little music. Don’t sit there like a mummy!”

But he started not, and she ran up to him, caught hold of his hand, and together they descended to the parlor.

“Here I come with my escort,” said she.

“So I see,” said Mrs. Lafond.

Mr. Alling withdrew to a corner of the room, where he seated himself partly behind the damask curtain, and appeared to be thinking of anything but what was going on around him.

The song was a very beautiful one, and a favorite with all who heard it. Some little time was consumed in the execution of the piece, after which, Mrs. Alling requested her friend would gratify her by singing, “Oh! for a Home among the Hills!”

“Well,” replied the other, “you must assist me!” and the piece was performed with their usual grace and ability.

Mrs. Lafond turned from the piano, saying, —

“ You sing well, Mrs. Alling ; but you ought to practise more, and you know that the piano is at your service at all times, and I should be only too happy if you would avail yourself of it, for I do so like to hear you sing.”

At that moment the clock in the kitchen reminded her that the hour of nine had come, and speaking to Mrs. Alling in a low tone, she said, —

“ I want to tell you something. Come with me a moment ;” and looking round discovered that Mr. Alling had fallen asleep.

They stepped softly into the hall, pulling the door to after them. Mrs. Lafond placed her hand on Mrs. Alling’s shoulder, and whispered, —

“ I expect my doctor to call this evening. I intended to have had an elegant bouquet prepared for him, he is so fond of flowers, and always expects some when he comes. I think I must arrange one now. But I am afraid to go out while the dew is falling, as I have not been well for a day or two ; the slightest cold may prove very injurious. If you do not think it too much trouble, my dear Agnes, and will step out to the arbor by the west gate, and bring me a few of those cluster roses with some

arbor vitæ and geranium, I shall be obliged to you. The language of them is particularly adapted to my present feelings, and the doctor is always studying flowers. He's so romantic!"

"Oh, no trouble at all!" replied Mrs. Alling. "I'll go with pleasure."

"Just pull off a large bunch."

"I will attend to it," said she, as she departed on her mission.

Mrs. Lafond hastened into the parlor, and hurriedly awoke Mr. Alling, saying, —

"Go quick! Now you will catch them! She has gone to meet him by the rose arbor! Go, quick!"

He hastened out of a back entrance, and stealing softly up behind the arbor, unheard and unseen, crept stealthily around the end until he gained the opposite path, and the next instant Mr. Carlton was clutched in his iron grasp, but soon released himself and made his escape through the gate into the alley, without serious injury.

With the first sound of footsteps, Agnes, who was gathering her flowers, and was wholly unconscious of the presence of any one, screamed, and ran toward the house, but had scarcely gone half the dis-

tance, before Mr. Alling caught her by the arm, giving her a whirl which sent her headlong to the ground, exclaiming, —

“ Lie there ! — d—n you ! ”

She quickly started to her feet, and proceeded to the house, followed by Mr. Alling with the face of a fiend.

Mrs. Lafond who had been watching the scene from a dark window, and laughing in her inmost soul at the success of her strategy, now made her appearance, and with a sanctimonious face and looks of astonishment, ejaculated, —

“ What is all this I hear ? for a man and his wife to go into the garden and quarrel ! Really I am astonished ! ” but said no more, for it was with difficulty she could suppress the rising laugh at the appearance of Agnes, covered with dust and in tears.

That night was spent in alternate sighs, threats, and tears ; a night long to be remembered. Mrs. Alling protested her innocence, and said that she knew nothing of an appointed meeting, that she had never spoken to the young man, and that she neither had nor wished to have any acquaintance whatever with him.

CHAPTER VI.

TIME passed on. A partial reconciliation took place between the parties, and nothing occurred worthy of note for several days.

One bright and beautiful Sunday morning Agnes returned from church, where she had been as usual unattended by her husband as he did not care to go ; and entering her room, she discovered at a glance that the large trunk containing the before-mentioned articles of clothing was missing, and upon investigation, she also found a silver card-case, knives, forks, spoons, and several other valuable articles were taken from another trunk, and nowhere to be found. Soon after Mr. Alling entered. She turned to him and said,—

“ Where is my trunk? I left it standing here when I went to church. What has become of it? ”

Mr. Alling walked across the room once or twice, and rather confusedly answered, in a rough tone,—

"How do you suppose I know where your trunk is? I expect some of your good friends have taken it away. You had better ask them where it is."

Agnes felt hurt at this remark, and said no more, feeling the force of the old adage, "The least said is soonest mended," but knew full well that he had disposed of it in some way or other.

Upon inquiry of the kitchen boy, she learned that Mr. Alling, during her absence at church, had borrowed a wheelbarrow and taken the trunk out of the western gate, through the alley, and wheeled it down the street, which was all he knew of it, as the last he saw of Mr. Alling, he was trying with all his might to hold himself back as he descended the hill with a heavy trunk in front of him.

Day after day Agnes urged him to tell her what had become of the trunk; that she knew he had taken it away, and she besought him to return it. But at the end of two weeks she knew no more what disposition had been made of it or its contents, than at the beginning. And in addition, she was several times reminded by Mrs. Lafond, that she had warned her to take care of those things and put them in a place of safety, but that when she had offered to be her friend, she would not confide in her,

and now she found it just as she had told her ; that he had taken them away from her as she knew he would ; and added with a toss of her head, —

“ I think you will believe me next time, wont you ? ”

Agnes now began to think the heavens and earth were arrayed against her. She knew not whom to trust, nor which way to look for comfort ; and she at times began to doubt whether Mr. Alling was in his right mind. Finally, after much earnest solicitation in regard to the trunk, he told her he had taken it away, and did not intend she should see it again or anything it contained.

“ But where could you take it on Sunday ? Nearly every place is closed,” said his wife.

“ Oh, I found a place open ! a Jew store on the corner, and I asked permission to leave it there a few days.”

“ Do you know who keeps the store ? ” she inquired.

“ No, that is none of my business. I only know he is a Jew, and looks like a clever man. I reckon the trunk is safe enough.”

Saying it was a Jew store on the corner, was very indefinite to the mind of Agnes, as there were

corners and Jew stores without number, in San Francisco. Therefore she gave herself no farther trouble on the subject, hoping that something unforeseen might occur to set matters right.

Only a few days after the occurrences above related, the State's mail arrived, by which Mrs. Alling received a long and ardent letter from her mother. It was handed her in presence of Mrs. Lafond, who began to rally her in a laughing manner, saying she supposed it was a love epistle from some of her old beaux in the States, and inquired, —

“Do they want you to come back?”

“It is nothing of the kind,” Mrs. Alling replied, who had opened the letter and was earnestly perusing its contents. “It is from my poor old mother, who is about this time anxiously expecting our return.”

But she had scarcely read half the letter when Mr. Alling was heard calling, —

“Agnes! Agnes! where are you?”

She started wildly up, exclaiming, —

“Oh dear! what shall I do? There is Mr. Alling! I would not have him see this letter for the world! Mother has asked some questions about him which would make him very angry and perhaps abuse me. Oh dear, what shall I do with it?”

“Put it in your bosom,” rejoined Mrs. Lafond.
“Don’t be so foolish!”

Agnes obeyed her suggestion, and quickly fastening her dress, called out, —

“Here I am! What do you want, my dear?”

“Come here! Come, I want you!” he answered.

She quietly obeyed the summons, and led the way to their room, Mr. Alling following. But he had scarcely ascended half the stairs, when Mrs. Lafond, with a cough, attracted his attention, and beckoned him back. Placing her hand to her mouth as in token of silence, she whispered, hurriedly, —

“She has a letter in her bosom. I think it is from some of her admirers. Put your hand around her waist and you will feel it,” which was all she wished to say.

Mr. Alling was detained but a moment, and gained the room soon after his wife entered it.

“Well,” said Agnes, “what can I do for you?” with her usual smiling face.

“Come here,” he said, “I want to talk with you;” and putting his arm around her waist, pulled her fondly toward him. When firmly in his grasp,

he charged her with having a letter that she was afraid to show him, he supposed from some of her old lovers.

A struggle now ensued in which the letter was wellnigh torn in fragments. At last, when she could hold out no longer, she exclaimed, —

“ Well, if you must know, the letter is from mother.”

“ Well, now,” said Mr. Alling, sneeringly, “ you can’t deceive me in that way ; I tell you you are not smart enough yet. I catch you in all your tricks, and I will have that letter.”

Mrs. Alling saw it was useless to resist farther, and handed it to him. Not stopping to peruse the contents, he glanced his eye at the bottom and saw “ from your affectionate mother, Sarah B. Eaton.” He dropped his head with a look of disappointment and shame, and reaching the letter towards her, exclaimed —

“ Well, well ; here Agnes, take your letter ; I don’t want it, and I don’t know in the name of heaven what I do want ! I would like to know what all these things mean, Agnes ; I believe I have been made the dupe of a wicked and designing woman ! ”

"What do you mean?" said she, "explain yourself."

A mutual explanation now took place. Mr. Alling recounted the various ways in which Mrs. Lafond had tried to influence him against his wife, and ingratiate herself into his favor. He was astonished and confounded at the revelation of his wife, and she in turn was equally surprised that Mrs. Lafond should be guilty of such double-dealing.

"Now," rejoined Agnes, "I will not remain longer under the roof of such a vile woman. Impious wretch! I will leave this house immediately. You can remain, if you like, but I shall go.

Mr. Alling concluded that he had been basely deceived by Mrs. Lafond, and had abused his wife without the slightest provocation, for which he earnestly begged her pardon, and Agnes now saw the reason of Mr. Alling's bad temper and unjust accusations, and felt that she had Mrs. Lafond to thank for all her troubles; but if in any way she had given him pain or uneasiness she was willing to be forgiven. Matters were now arranged, and it was decided that they should leave on the following day for Sacramento. Accordingly everything was made ready, and they took a very unceremonious leave of

Mrs. Lafond and the boarding-house, and on reaching the boat, found the missing trunk all right, which Mr. Alling had ordered to be taken there from the Jew store. On their arrival at Sacramento, they proceeded immediately to one of the best hotels, but which at this day even in that place would be considered about fifth rate. On entering the house, the first thing that attracted Mrs. Alling's notice was a piece of canvas, about four feet long, and a foot wide, stretched across the hall with a rope on which was written in coarse black letters, "Rest for the Weary, and storage for trunks." Stopping short and bursting into a hearty laugh, she read the sign aloud, and then turning to Mr. Alling, remarked —

"Here is where they store trunks, perhaps they will keep yours for you; it would save you the trouble of going to the grocery store next time. Right handy; isn't it?"

"Come, come, Agnes, none of your nonsense here," said Mr. Allen, reaching out his hand to conduct her up-stairs. We will here attempt to give the reader a short description of the room assigned our guests. It was situated at the extreme end of a long hall on the second floor; its dimensions were about eight by ten feet, the floor was covered

with Chinese matting, a plain yellow bedstead of the three-quarter size, a common old-fashioned wash-stand, two rickety chairs, and a looking-glass about six by eight inches, with only one pillow and towel completed the arrangements of the room. The quick eye of Agnes took in everything at a glance, and with a mischievous smile playing about her mouth she turned to Mr. Alling and said —

“ Well, I suppose this is California life. It isn’t much like our home in the States, is it?” But seeing him dissatisfied and downcast, she continued, “ Never mind, better luck next time ; this is romantic, I like it.”

“ Yes, you like it,” replied he sneeringly, his eyes at the same time wandering around the room in search of a bell ; but finding none he passed into the hall thinking to go down to the office. Meeting a half-breed digger acting in the capacity of waiter, he told him that he wished to see the landlord at his room, and turning back closed the door after him, and with a meek, submissive look and a self-satisfied air, seated himself in one of the rickety chairs by the window, which was no sooner done than, with a reel and a creak, down went chair, Mr. Alling, and all, with a crash which shook the house nearly to its founda-

tions. He had scarcely time to recover an erect position, when the door opened and the landlord a burly, blustering, thick-set, sunburned fellow called out to know what was the matter.

“ What kind of a d—d room do you call this to give to decent people? ” said Mr. Alling, looking down at the chair in fragments at his feet. “ Is this what you call good accommodations? ”

“ Well, it is about one of our best rooms, and the only one we have vacant now, ” he replied.

“ Well, ” said Mr. Alling, “ I reckon fifty dollars a week a mighty big price for such accommodations as these, being it’s on the sunny side of the house, and no blinds nor nothing to keep the sun out; ” then pointing to the broken chair, continued, “ if everything in your establishment sir, is like this, I assure you, sir, without telling a bit of a lie, that I don’t think much of it, sir.”

The landlord apologized by saying —

“ This is California; we don’t expect things quite as nice as in the States. But this is the best we can do, and I think you will find it quite comfortable, ” and continued, “ What State are you from sir? ”

“ I am from Virginia, sir, the garden spot of the world, ” he replied.

“Ah! I see, one of the F. F. V’s I suppose,” replied mine host, casting a sideways look at Agnes who was intently looking out of the window.

“Well I reckon that’s what they call them,” replied Mr. Alling, with a stretch and a yawn, snapping his thumbs with satisfaction, “but I tell you it’s a mighty fine country that, sir.”

“So I have understood,” said the landlord, “but — well, this is your daughter I suppose?”

“Daughter!” muttered Mr. Alling, between his teeth, “it is my wife, sir.”

“Oh! your wife! Is she from Virginia too?”

“No,” said Mr. Alling, “she is a Yankee gal.”

“Lucky,” replied the proprietor of the “Rest for the Weary.” And turning towards Mrs. Alling, continued, “We will make you as comfortable as we can here, madam, and I have no doubt you will soon become so in love with our beautiful climate, that you will never want to leave it;” saying which he left the room.

The broken furniture was soon replaced by new, and some little additions made in the way of necessities, which gave the room quite an air of comfort.

A month wore away gradually and slowly, and no tidings from the Eastern States; the mails came and

went as usual, but brought neither letters nor money to Mr. Alling. Now came a trying time. On the mind of our *wealthy Southerner* it made little impression ; but to the cool and calculating Agnes, it came with full force ; the hope of receiving remittances from the *large estates* of Mr. Alling in Virginia in time to meet their necessities, was now crushed ; before the time for another mail to arrive, their means would be exhausted, and they turned into the street in a strange land, penniless and without friends. Many were the sleepless hours passed by Mrs. Alling, trying to devise means for their deliverance, while her husband lay soundly sleeping, not even dreaming of distress or trouble by a thought for the morrow. One morning on awaking from her restless, unrefreshing slumber, and finding her husband had already arisen, after saying "good morning, Dan," she proceeded to inquire what he thought could be the reason they did not hear from home, and added, "Something must be done, either you or I, or both, must go to work ; this seems to be a country where every one works, rich and poor, and I see no other way ; we have not sufficient money left to pay two weeks' board, and again I ask what shall we do ? Something must be done quickly there is no time to lose."

Mr. Alling arose from his seat and in a confused and hurried manner, paced the room.

"Well, then go to work if you want to," he replied, sharply, "I don't choose to; the money will come in time, and I would like to see any man undertake to put me out of the house," and with a sneering laugh, added, —

"I could buy and sell this fellow a dozen times over, and all he has got. I'd show him Virginians were not to be trifled with. Go to work if you want to! I wont hinder you! You have been brought up to it I suppose, I have not."

Agnes interrupted him with, —

"I don't want to work; but I see no other way unless you start in some kind of business, which you say you have no intention of doing. It matters not to people here whether we are millionaires or paupers. It is all the same to them. If we have not the money to pay our bills here, they don't believe we have it any where. They say rich people don't come to California. That if they are well off they remain at home; and I am sure I would rather work for my living than to be dependent on charity, or place myself under obligations to any one."

"Well, work, then! don't I tell you, if you are

so anxious!" growled Mr. Alling, as he slammed the door after him, and descended below to take his morning dram.

Mrs. Alling, left to herself, began to devise means for saving what little money they had, or investing it to the best advantage, and when her husband returned she proposed that they should go to house-keeping, saying, that from what she had learned from papers and otherwise, they could very much lessen their expenses by so doing, to which he objected on the ground of its being too much care; that for his part, he did not want the trouble of marketing. But Agnes persisted, and he at last consented, saying if she chose to get a house and go to housekeeping she could do so, but he did not wish to be troubled with it.

The sum of eighty dollars was all that remained of their "pile," as Californians say, and this was to be appropriated for rent, furniture, wood, and other necessaries, beds, bedding, etc.

"I don't see," said Mr. Alling, as they walked up J Street in search of a tenement, "I don't see how you are going to make out with so little money."

“ Oh ! ” replied Agnes, as buoyant as ever, “ fortune favors the brave, so I have no fears.”

“ Well,” rejoined her husband, with a grave, serious look, I suppose we must trust in Providence.”

“ Yes,” she replied, “ Providence helps those who help themselves, and that is what we must do ;” and turning the corner into Sixth Street, passing by several low shanties, came upon a block of one-story houses, upon about every other door of which, read, “ This house to rent, apply at No. 8.”

Looking in at the windows at the heaps of rubbish, the coarse cotton, torn and hanging from the ceiling, and dirty partitions covered with cobwebs, with windows broken, and the doors without fastenings, it altogether did not present a very enviable picture. At the farther end of the block, and divided from the next by a narrow alley or passage way, was a house presenting altogether a different aspect and impressed one with the idea that it was built for the lord of the manor, or some person of note, for instead of the low flat roof and unpainted front, the roof of the corner house was fashioned into something of the Gothic order, and the entire outside of the building was neatly whitewashed. The interior

was divided into four rooms, parlor, bedroom, dining-room, and kitchen, and for a cloth and paper house, (was finished in good order, which consists of a frame, boarded up and down on the outside, with common coarse muslin tacked to the inside instead of plastering, and papered over.) In this case the walls were hung with very neat paper, and what little of wood-work remained to be seen, was painted white. Altogether it presented quite a respectable appearance. Applying at No. 8, as directed, arrangements were soon completed for the corner house, which had been built and occupied by the owner of the block, and who had vacated it just previous, leaving the cook stove, dishes, cooking utensils, etc., which he kindly offered to loan, as he had no use for them.

Mrs. Alling soon procured furniture and other necessaries as far as her means would permit, and commenced housekeeping quite comfortably.

A week passed without any movement on the part of Mr. Alling to engage in business to procure means for their subsistence. But he sat through all the long days by the side of his wife, in a dull, dreamy stupor, half waking, half sleeping, without speaking, either to discuss matters

or say what he intended to do, and never left the house except to procure his usual drams.

The eyes of Mrs. Alling were now open to her true condition. She found that she had nothing to depend upon but her own exertions, and her mind often wandered back to the designing-room of Madame Lamont, and the many hard taught lessons she learned there, and now from her inmost soul she thanked Heaven for that experience, bitter though it was, as now it was likely to become her only support. Her course of action was soon decided upon. A rude sign was procured, made of canvas, upon which was painted in black letters, "Fashionable dress making," and placed over the door of the little cottage, the front room of which was soon converted into a dress-making establishment, the walls hung round with patterns of all descriptions, sorts, and sizes, which she had manufactured from former recollections, and trimmed with tissue paper, pink, blue, green, and yellow.

For several days after the door was thrown open to customers, it was literally crowded with grotesque figures of Chinamen, Spaniards, and digger Indians, eager to satisfy their curiosity as to the use of the fancy colored papers which were swayed to and fro by every passing breeze as it moved the cloth and

paper partition on which they were fastened. They eagerly thronged door and windows, muttering to each other in their low, gutteral tones which were as unintelligible except to themselves, as the croaking of so many frogs, while occasionally a moon-eyed celestial of the feminine gender, would venture in to examine the patterns and ask, "How muchee, how muchee?" On being informed they were not for sale, they retreated in double quick.

Only a short time was required to establish the reputation of this house, and Mrs. Alling was the acknowledged leader of fashions.

Time passed on. Custom increased, and with the little help Mrs. Alling was able to procure, she was obliged to work not only through the long, weary day, but oftentimes far into the small hours of the night. Her husband sat by her side day after day, rarely speaking except when spoken to, and then in the roughest tones; but the hope of accumulating the money besides paying their expenses of living, necessary to take them to the Eastern States, where she felt confident he possessed sufficient wealth to support them in luxury the rest of their days, and whither he had promised to go as soon as they could command the means, gave a fresh impetus to her

labor, and kept open her drooping eyelids through many a weary night.

By dint of hard labor and economy, Mrs. Alling had laid aside a few dollars toward the much-wished-for object, when on a bright Saturday morning, as is customary in that place, the grocery bill was presented, the merchant telling her at the same time that he supposed he must give it to her, as in California they only recognized one head to a house, and as you are the business man of the two, he added, with a smile, I suppose I must look to you for my pay.

The amount of the bill for one week's dry groceries was thirty-five dollars. Mrs. Alling glanced her eye hastily at the footing up and remarked, —

“ Pretty large bill for two persons, but I suppose it is right; however, I should like to look it over, but am busy now, and if you will be kind enough to leave it, I will settle it this evening.”

On examining the bill, under a certain date was charged one bottle of wine, six dollars; two plugs of tobacco, one dollar; and under another date was one bottle French brandy, five dollars; one bottle Sherry, five dollars, one plug of tobacco, fifty cents.

She read the bill aloud to her husband, asking

him the reason for this useless waste of her hard earnings ; he flew into a rage, and with horrid oaths told her it was none of her business, and added,—

“ By —— madam ! you talk to me as if I was some poor scamp that never had a dollar in the world ; but I'll let you know, madam,” shaking his fist in her face, “ that I could buy and sell you and all your relations.”

“ You might,” she added, coolly, “ if we were black, and down South, but you can't do it here.”

The bill was duly paid, and for a week or two was much lessened, when another bill for about the same amount, was presented. But no items of the kind appeared, though on a strict investigation Mrs. Alling learned that about the same amount of liquor had been drank, and pipes and tobacco passed around at her expense, in the little back room of the grocery store, between Mr. Alling and some half dozen others, who were not much use to themselves or any one else. But this time the amount had been made up, on the bill by an additional quantity in pounds and ounces of butter, cheese, lard, etc. At last she decided to pay cash and have no more credit.

Day after day Mrs. Alling toiled on dwelling upon

her eastern home, and meeting with her friends as an incentive to labor. Each day brought its work, with no amusement or anything to break the monotony except the smiling faces and pleasant interviews with her customers. One evening at twilight as she sat by the window busily engaged with her needle, the words of an old and favorite air, "The joys that we've tasted," came into her mind, and she commenced singing, forgetting herself and everything around her, until Mr. Alling flew into the room, exclaiming —

"Agnes, Agnes, stop singing! Don't you see that you attract every one's attention in the neighborhood? They will think you are crazy!"

Agnes looked up like one startled from a pleasant dream, exclaiming —

"Why, what is the matter!" and moving from the window, continued her work in silence. A day or two after this occurrence, a lady friend called, introducing Mr. Williams, who having been previously informed of the would-be aristocratic notions of Mr. Allen and his love of flattery, addressed himself principally to him saying that he was the leader of the choir in the Fourth St. Church, that he had been looking for some time for a lady singer to take

the place of his wife who was out of health ; and as the choir was a quartette, he had none to spare, that on a previous evening while at his store on J. Street, he had heard Mrs. Alling's voice from the window, and had come to try and engage her services, offering liberal pay. Mr. Alling raised no objections, and Agnes was engaged, and a few days thereafter became a member of a company then forming for instruction and improvement in vocal exercises, called the " Philharmonic Society," and composed of all the musical talent in the city, and at whose reunions no one was present but members or persons invited by them. Once a week they met for practice, and Agnes was usually attended there and home again by some male member of the society unless her husband could be persuaded to go, which was seldom the case, as he had no taste for music ; and oftentimes she was also accompanied by a member of her family who was engaged as seamstress in her establishment by the name of St. Clair, who was not a member of the society but was very fond of music. About six months had now elapsed of Mrs. Alling's public life in Sacramento ; she was always to be found in the choir on Sunday, attended regularly the rehearsals at the society's rooms, took the

lead in the world of fashion, and was a favorite generally. One evening, attended by a member of the society by the name of Leroy and Miss St. Clair, Mrs. Alling went as usual to the rehearsal, and on this occasion her husband had promised to come there at intermission to attend them home. The settees were so arranged, and the seats so disposed, that the one assigned Mrs. Alling commanded a view of the stairway and lower door. Before the time of intermission arrived, and during an interval in the singing, on looking down she discovered a gentleman standing in the shade of the doorpost, and thinking it to be her husband, beckoned him to come up, but he came not; again and again did she signify by nods and signs that she wished him to come up into the room, but he did not stir; intermission came and passed. All was joyous and happy, the sweet silvery notes of song floated out on the breeze, and none knew or thought of the sadness which dwelt in more than one sinking heart in that little circle. The rehearsal over, Mr. Leroy attended the ladies to their residence where they found Mr. Alling in the corner of a dimly lighted room with his hat drawn down over his eyes, and apparently half-asleep. Agnes ran up to him on entering, exclaiming —

“ Why did you not come up when I beckoned you? ”

“ Come up where, ” he gruffly responded. “ What are you talking about? ”

“ Why, ” she replied, “ come up into the rehearsal room to be sure ; you were standing at the door a long time, and I motioned you time and again to come up, but you paid no attention. ”

“ I don’t know what you are talking about, ” said he. “ I have not been near the place to-night, and I tell you what it is Agnes, you had better leave off beckoning to people that you know nothing about. You will get yourself into trouble by and by. ”

“ Well, ” said she, “ I certainly thought it was you. I am sure every one who knows me would know it was a mistake. ”

On the following morning Mr. Alling arose very early as usual, and as was his custom went to the front door to look out ; but directly returned waking his wife from her sound sleep, saying,

“ Here, Agnes is a letter for somebody. I found it tucked under the door. ”

She took it and looking at the superscription which read to Miss ——, replied,

“ I suppose it is for Miss St. Clair. She is not

up, I will take it to her; accordingly he laid the letter down and walked out; presently Agnes arose and dressing herself proceeded to Miss St. Clair's room, never for a moment suspecting the missive could be intended for herself.

“Here Sarah,” said Mrs. Alling, “is a letter I suppose for you, as you are the only Miss this establishment affords,” at the same time handing it to her. “It was found under the door, placed there by some unknown hand; one of your gay admirers, I suppose, who had not sufficient courage to show himself,” she continued, laughing. Miss St. Clair hastily broke the seal and commenced reading:—

“MY DEAR MISS:—

Beauty and music have charms, charms for me, but unfortunately I possess neither, and as I wandered up the street last evening in a thoughtful, serious mood, I was attracted by the sounds of sweet flowing strains, following which I soon found myself at the foot of a flight of stairs which led up into a room from whence the sounds proceeded, and on the door was written in unmistakable characters, ‘No admittance,’ which was an intimation that I must content myself with what I could hear, and see outside, but my dear Miss, you may imagine how my heart bound-

ed with joy when you motioned me to come up, but it was all to no purpose, as that hateful 'No admittance' was a barrier to my entrance. I lingered about the door in the hope of getting a good look at my fair unknown friend, until the meeting broke up, and watched you home.

Hoping ere long to be able to gain admittance to those sweet reunions.

I remain, yours devotedly,
J. P. S."

"Why!" said Miss St. Clair, "this surely is not for me, it must be yours, Mrs. Alling, and that was the gentleman you beckoned to, whom you thought was your husband."

"Well it would seem so, indeed, by the reading," she replied, "it isn't of any consequence any way." And the letter was consigned to the flames.

On the day following, the event just narrated, Mr. Alling was sitting as usual, twirling his thumbs, and muttering to himself, when a lad of about sixteen years came up to the door, and requested an interview with him outside, which was granted, and after a few moments' earnest conversation, Mr. Alling started hurriedly down the street. About three blocks below Sixth, on J. Street was a large and

fashionable dry goods store, which rejoiced in the name of "Rand and Co." On the afternoon in question it was thronged with an incongruous mass of customers, rancheros, miners, celestials, ladies, and citizens generally. All intent on making their purchases, no one seemed to notice a tall, dark figure as he passed rapidly into the store, until about midway when stopping, and looking wildly around, his eye rested upon an elderly gentleman behind the counter, then walking hastily up to him, inquired for Mr. Rand.

"I am that gentleman," he replied blandly.

"Oh ! you are, hey ! then come over that counter d — d quick, or I'll make mincemeat of you, but I don't like to do it before all those customers ; come over here I say, quick."

"I don't know you," coolly replied Mr. Rand.

"I am from Virginia, sir, and my name is Alling all the world over ; and I'll give you such a d — d thrashing" —

At this moment a clergyman who was present stepped up, and, placing his hand on the arm of Mr. Alling, commenced expostulating with him, whereupon with a slight turn of the head in the direction of the clergyman, he exclaimed, —

“ You go to h—l, won’t you ! I reckon I can take care of my business ! ” and turning again to Mr. Rand, he hallooed at the top of his voice, “ Come out here, I say, you d—d scoundrel ! ”

By this time all the male inmates of the store had gathered around expecting to see one or the other laid low, which Mr. Rand observing, and wishing to avoid any unnecessary commotion in his store, walked quietly out into the street, Mr. Alling and the crowd following. Mr. Rand demanded an explanation of the mysterious affair, his coolness and firmness rather put a quietus upon the hot-headed chivalrous spirit of old Virginia, Mr. Alling only reiterating, —

“ I’ll show you, sir, that you are not going to insult me or my wife. I will mash you, sir, finer than powder ! ”

Mr. Rand declared in most positive terms that he knew not what he alluded to ; that he did not know Mrs. Alling at all, only by reputation, which was of the fairest kind, and that he had never seen her. Mr. Alling now becoming calm, entered into an explanation, saying that he had been credibly informed that he, (Mr. Rand) and another gentleman had been prowling about his house at a late hour the

evening before, and passing slighty remarks concerning his wife.

Mr. Rand protested his innocence, saying that he knew nothing of her, therefore could say nothing, except if he spoke at all it must be in the highest terms, and that he never heard her spoken of otherwise ; but informed Mr. Alling that a lady customer, a dressmaker, also living in Sixth Street, had purchased a bill of goods the day previous at his store, which was forgotten to be delivered until about the time of closing for the night, and his porter being ~~so~~ he thought to carry it himself ; that as he and his ~~head~~ clerk were wending their way homeward, bundle in hand, going up Sixth Street, not knowing the precise locality of the lady's residence, on passing the corner house, seeing the words " Dressmaking " on the sign, were about to knock, when the clerk exclaimed, " This is not the place, this is where Mrs. Alling lives," and passed on.

This explanation was sufficient to show to even the hot-headed Mr. Alling that he had been wrongly informed by the lad of sixteen, and shaking hands with Mr. Rand he begged his pardon, and walked quietly homeward.

CHAPTER VII.

THE week sped by. The long, weary days were succeeded by toilsome nights, and again came the evening for the society's reunion, which passed without anything worthy of note.

On the following morning another letter was found addressed and deposited as the previous day, and duly delivered to Miss St. Clair. When a convenient opportunity occurred, she opened and read as follows :—

“ MY DEAR MISS : —

You cannot for one moment imagine the joy which thrilled my heart at sight of you last evening. The sweet notes which flowed from those lips, enraptured my soul, and how I longed for some friend to bring me nearer that beloved object ; but I wished in vain. I love you, and here confess it, and shall seek some means by which to obtain an honorable introduction, hoping that it may be agreeable on your part, though

I may find some trouble in doing so, as I have been a resident of the city but a short time, with very limited acquaintances, none of whom, I am sorry to say, have the pleasure of knowing you.

If you wish to know my name, by procuring a copy of the "Farmer's and Mechanic's Almanac for the year 185—" you will find it among the judges of the courts in Yuba County, which you will know by the initials.

Hoping that the feeling here expressed will be fully reciprocated, I remain,

Yours sincerely,
J. P. S."


"Another letter for you, Mrs. Alling," ejaculated Miss St. Clair. "I wonder what the man is thinking about."

"Indeed I do not know," replied Mrs. Alling. "Whoever he may be, he is evidently laboring under a mistake or mental aberration; or, perhaps he is a monomaniac, crazy on the subject of music," and bursting into a merry laugh, continued, "or maybe I remind him of some one he has known in former years, some of his old loves, perhaps; but at any rate my woman's curiosity prompts me to know his name if it can be so easily found out," and

remembering a pile of old papers snugly stowed away upon the top of a cupboard in the kitchen, which had been left there among other things by the landlord, she proceeded to examine them to see if possibly she might find a copy of the before-mentioned almanac. She was about giving up the search as fruitless, when last of all, as of course it would be, she found the desired document, and turning over page after page to the place designated, she read, "James Payne Smith."

Day after day, and week after week passed, each week bringing a letter directed and deposited ~~and~~ before, which was read and destroyed without reply, and all thus far remained a mystery.

As time rolled around and the country became more and more settled, the population pouring in from the States, the march of improvement was rapidly onward. The opening of the Sacramento Valley railroad was an event to be hailed with enthusiasm, and though it was completed but about twenty-two miles, as far as the little village of Folsom, it was decided to inaugurate it by a grand ball, to take place at that point. Mr. and Mrs. Alling, with Miss St. Clair, were duly invited by Mr. Le-Roy to attend. Mr. Alling declined, saying he did

not dance ; but was perfectly willing his wife should go in company with Miss St. Clair, if she wished, to which she assented, saying she would be pleased to do so if he had no objections. He declared he had none ; but as soon as Mr. LeRoy took his leave he burst into a violent fit of passion, and declared she should never go one step ; that he only said so for effect before him, but did not think she would be so foolish as to think of such a thing.

“ You go to a ball indeed ! wouldn’t you look pretty ? ” he sneeringly remarked. “ You would look like some old nigger wench dressed up in finery.”

Agnes explained, and Miss St. Clair expostulated, and when the day arrived Mr. Alling was found ready to accompany them.

On arriving at the depot, Mrs. Alling, in turning the corner of the building, unwittingly looked up the street and saw standing on a crossing, a man, holding a white handkerchief, who no sooner discovered her looking, than he waved it two or three times in token of adieu, and crossed over the street. The distance was so great it was impossible for her to tell features or complexion, but she conjectured that it must be the untiring “ James Payne Smith.”

On sped the cars, crowded to overflowing with the elite of Sacramento and San Francisco. Gay and friaky matrons, fashionable belles, old men and maidens, a conglomerated mass of humanity. The shrill steam whistle reverberated among the granite hills, and the cattle and horses along the road ran screaming with fright to the farthest accessible point. Loud shouts rent the air, amid the waving of handkerchiefs and swinging of hats, as the first train from Sacramento entered the little town of Folsom, with the stars and stripes flying at its head.

The hotel, which was large and commodious, considering the size of the place, was crowded to overflowing. A spacious dancing hall had been erected for the occasion, three hundred feet in length, with a stand at each end to accommodate a full band of music. The hall was handsomely decorated with evergreens, and everything arranged for the comfort and convenience of the dancers.

About nine o'clock in the evening, the gay party entered the hall to the number of three hundred couple, and the dancing commenced. Mr. Alling refused, saying he did not dance; that having met some friends there he would remain outside with them.

Scarcely had the clock chimed the hour of eleven, when loud talk and boisterous threats were heard at the door, and soon the voice of Mr. Alling was heard above the rest exclaiming,—

“D—n you and your old ball-room too! I swear I will come in! my wife is in here, and you keep me out if you can!” upon which the door-keeper politely informed him that it was necessary to have a ticket, the price of which was five dollars.

“D—n you and your ticket too!” sharply retorted Mr. Alling. “ Didn’t I come on the railroad?” saying which he caught hold of the door-keeper, and pushing him violently to one side stepped into the hall.

At the first intimation of trouble, Mr. LeRoy who was upon the floor going through the dance, recognizing in the belligerent party the voice of Mr. Alling, immediately conducted his partner to a seat, and rushed for the door thinking that perhaps he might explain matters satisfactorily to both parties and avoid the enactment of a disgraceful scene. Laying his hand gently on the arm of Mr. Alling, he inquired in his usual mild manner,—

“What is the matter, Mr. Alling?”

"Matter enough, you d——d scoundrel!" retorted Mr. Alling, hissing through his closed teeth, and casting a look of indignation at him. "Hands off of me sir, or I'll mash you finer than powder!" and whirling past him, rushed wildly around the hall in search of his wife, with glaring eyes and uplifted hands, like a defiant maniac just escaped from the madhouse.

Mrs. Alling was upon the floor tripping to the time of stirring music through the many changes of a quadrille, with a highly respectable and talented gentleman from San Francisco, who had been introduced for the occasion. Mr. Alling paused until there was an interval in the dance, then rushing up by the side of his wife, bawled out, —

"Here I am Agnes, come along with me. I wont have you here!" and suiting the action to the word, caught her by the arm, and was about to drag her from the room, when Agnes, quick as thought, and without uttering a word, gave a sudden whirl and sent him reeling on to a settee at the other side of the room, and was back in her place going through the dance before Mr. Alling had time to see where he was. When he collected himself a little he muttered between his lips, —

“ Well I’ll be golldinged if that aint a right smart chance of a dance ! I hope to die if it aint ? ”

The dance being ended, Agnes was escorted to a seat by the side of her husband, where he had remained quiet since he landed there, without moving hand or foot, and was content to remain for some little time longer ; at length Miss St. Clair rallying him proposed that he should dance the next quadrille with her.

“ For the love of heaven,” said Agnes, “ don’t get into the set with me, or I shall faint.”

“ No,” replied Miss St. Clair, “ I hope not.”

The next call was for a polka, which Agnes politely refused to participate in, pleading fatigue as an excuse, but in reality feeling chagrined and perplexed at the disgraceful conduct of her husband, whom she now saw to be slightly inebriated. She was now the observed of all observers, and many were the surmises and interrogations rife among the company as to how, why, and wherefore Mr. Alling came possessed of such a gem.

“ He must have stolen her and run away to this country with her,” said one.

“ Yes,” rejoined a companion, “ for there can surely be no sympathy between such direct oppo-

sites ; all that is lovely, noble, and good on the 'one hand, and everything that is ugly, villainous and low on the other."

Agnes well understood the idle speculations of those around her ; but it mattered little, for her noble spirit was above all thought of wrong doing : and her innate pride and self-respect was a safeguard under all circumstances however trying.

The next call was a quadrille, and Miss St. Clair reminded Mr. Alling of his engagement, thinking to flatter him into good-humor, and taking his arm proceeded to their place on the floor. Almost simultaneously, Mrs. Alling accepted a proffered hand for the dance, and was assigned a place in the same set directly opposite that of her husband. She looked up and down the hall, and in almost all directions except at her husband, for she felt her mirthful propensities rising to a pitch almost beyond control. When the word was given " Top couple forward and back," Mr. Alling came dancing up to his wife holding out the fulness of his pants on either side, according to the custom practised in Virginia thirty years before.

Miss St. Clair being an accomplished dancer, managed to take him through the figure much to his sat-

isfaction, and the general amusement of those in the immediate vicinity.

The dance ended, the two ladies unable to control their feelings retired to the dressing-room, where they indulged in a general fit of laughter amounting almost to hysterics.

Supper was announced which reflected much credit upon the proprietor of the hotel, after which the company repaired to the hall, and the "fairy" dance was prolonged until the sun rose above the eastern hills, when most of the company half asleep, and ready to fall with fatigue, wended their way to the cars, and were soon flying over the road towards their homes. The affair at the ball was never mentioned at the home of Agnes, and no allusion was made to the unknown lover, though the epistles were regularly deposited in their place each morning after the meeting at the Society's rooms; but as they were addressed to Miss —— with no name, they were supposed by Mr. Alling to belong to Miss St. Clair, and elicited no remark from him except to rally her occasionally on having such a correspondent. The letters were never answered, as no one knew who the mysterious "James Payne Smith" was or anything concerning him. As for Mrs. Alling she had not

the slightest idea of him ; she only knew, or thought she knew the gentleman who she motioned to come up into the rehearsal room, was of dark complexion, and resembled her husband, therefore at the time she felt sure it was him ; but Miss St. Clair had pointed out to her a far different looking person, who frequently passed and looked wistfully in at the window, and also on Sunday procured a seat as near as possible, scarcely ever taking his eyes off Mrs. Alling during the services, listening in rapt enchantment to the sweet cadence of her voice as it rose and fell in the duets and anthems of the day, and at the close of the services would walk close behind them until they entered the house ; but she could never believe that he was the mysterious stranger, as his size and complexion not at all resembled that of her husband.

Mrs. Alling had been prospered in her business, and had laid aside several hundred dollars, and now began to make preparations to return to the Eastern States. The members of the "Philharmonic" began to deprecate her loss, and the little church on Fourth Street were making arrangements for some one to fill her place. In this state of affairs one dark, gloomy day (for the rainy season was not yet

over), a loud knock came at the door, and a man carrying a heavy bundle called out —

“ Does Miss Alling live here ? ”

Mr. Alling stepped forward and taking the package, the man sprang into his wagon and drove rapidly away. Mrs. Alling opened the package, and found it to contain several large elegantly bound books, in morocco and gilt inlaid with pearls, also a letter begging her to accept this trifling gift as a token of affection from a sincere friend ; that having heard of her intended departure for the East, he had selected these books, hoping they would beguile some weary hours on her passage to New York, that he had often tried to find some one through whom he could obtain an honorable introduction, but in vain, and now all hope was past, and he had no wish to remain longer in California, when the idol of his heart was gone, and that by the time she arrived in New York, he should be flying on the swift wings of steam as rapidly in an opposite direction ; but she might rest assured wherever she might be there was one true heart roaming the wide world, that would ever pray for her peace and happiness. Signed J. P. S.

The letter escaped Mr. Alling's observation, and

immediately upon being read was destroyed. On examining the books they were found to be selections from the most popular authors, and to which no one could take exceptions, even the most fastidious. On the presentation page of each was inscribed in an elegant style of penmanship, "Presented to Miss Alling by a sincere friend." And among the number was an elegantly bound album, on the first page of which was written in a plain but easy and flowing style, "Presented in the spirit of sincere affection, fidelity, and truth, to Miss Alling, in homage to her beauty, goodness and virtue, by one whose constant and earnest prayer is for her temporal and eternal welfare. Sacramento, 185—"

Mr. Alling, on reading the inscription, flew into a violent rage, and with uplifted hands and horrid oaths, charged his wife with infidelity and duplicity, and swinging his clenched fists in her face, swore by the Holy Virgin that if she did not immediately confess all, he would eat her up. Miss St. Clair besought him with tears to be quiet and listen to an explanation, but Agnes sat motionless as a statue and pale as marble, with lips compressed, and eyes glaring wildly at him. The shock was too much for her feeble nerves, strained to their utmost tension.

by weeks and months of hard labor, with very little cessation or rest; for often, to meet her engagements, the gray dawn of morning would find her still at work. She spoke not a word, but looked steadily on without the slightest movement of the eye, or motion of the lips, until the muscles about the mouth began to twitch, and she went into a spasm from which she did not recover for several hours. Miss St. Clair hung over her, administering restoratives, and watching her returning consciousness with all the anxious devotion of a sister, while Mr. Alling outwardly relented of his harsh treatment, but which was of short duration. Their stay in Sacramento was unexpectedly prolonged for two or three weeks.

One evening, soon after exercises commenced at the Society's room, two strange gentlemen entered and took seats on a sofa not far from where Mrs. Alling and Miss St. Clair were sitting. One was of medium height, rather stout, round, pleasant face, with whiskers and hair intermingled with gray, and apparently about fifty years of age; the other was about thirty-five, of the average height, but rather slight, with fine features, bright hazel eyes, and sandy hair and whiskers, with the dress and appearance of a gentlemen of fine cultivation.

“There he is,” whispered Miss St. Clair; “there he is.”

“Who?” said Mrs. Alling.

“Why, the gentleman that has watched you so closely, always looking in at the window as he passes, and who I suppose sent you the books; Mr. Smith,” said Miss St. Clair.

“Oh no indeed!” said Mrs. Alling, “that is not the man at all; at least, that is not the one I mentioned to, whom I suppose is the veritable Mr. Smith. He is not at all that complexion. He was very dark; they do not appear to know any one here, and I suppose they have been invited in for the purpose of passing a pleasant hour in listening to the music. This was all they had time to say before they were called to join in a selection from “Fra Diavolo.”

That evening, owing to a previous engagement, Miss St. Clair could only consent to accompany Mrs. Alling provided she would return home at intermission, which was agreed to; accordingly when that time came they rose to take their leave, and were attended by Mr. LeRoy who bade them a hasty good night and returned to the rehearsal room.

The next day towards evening, Mr. LeRoy called, and not having met Mr. Alling since the night of the ball at Folsom, and knowing that he entertained toward him a spirit of hatred for the part he took in that night's transaction, and not wishing to encounter him, asked to see Mrs. Alling at the door. He informed her in as few words as possible that a highly respectable gentleman by the name of Smith, had become an honorary member of the "Philharmonic Society," for the express purpose of making her acquaintance, and went on to say, "Last night when the rehearsal was over he came to me and in an agitated manner asked if I would introduce him to Miss Alling, saying that as he was comparatively a stranger in the city all means for making her acquaintance had hitherto failed him.

" 'Miss Alling ! ' I replied ; ' I don't know any Miss Alling. '

" ' I mean the lady you attended home this evening at intermission, ' responded Mr. Smith.

" ' Oh, Mrs. Alling ! ' said I.

" ' Mrs. Alling ! ' ejaculated Mr. Smith. ' By Heaven, it is not possible ! I cannot be so deceived, I will not ! She is not married ! it must not be ! '

“ ‘ ‘ Why,’ I replied, ‘ what reason had you to suppose her single?’

“ The reasons were simply given, — that he had learned upon inquiry that a family named Alling lived in that house. When he saw them on the street together, which was seldom the case, they walked quietly apart from each other without making much conversation, and from the great apparent difference in age, he was sure they must be father and daughter, and especially was he confirmed in this opinion by the fact that he never came to the Society’s room with her, and that she was usually attended there and home by some member of the Society, and,” continued Mr. Leroy, “ this startling announcement nearly overwhelmed him. He had allowed his feelings to get the better of his judgment, to love one whom he knew nothing of. Awakening to the real truth was almost like taking his life. I never experienced such feelings of sympathy for a fellow mortal in my life. Hour after hour I walked the street with him in the silence of the night, and tried to console him, but he would not be comforted, his hopes were crushed in a moment, and to him, now that you was beyond his reach, life was nothing. In pity to him, and in justice to yourself, I promised

before leaving him late in the night, to see you to-day, and state the case, and on his behalf beg your pardon for all intrusion, but request you to retain the books in remembrance of him." The foregoing conversation was repeated in a hurried manner ; but scarcely had Mr. Leroy turned from the door, than Mr. Alling entered, and with eyes flashing fire ran up to Agnes, exclaiming —

" What was that d——d scoundrel doing here ? He had better never let me catch him here. I haven't forgotten the night of the ball. He wants to lay hands on me again don't he ? D——n him, I will grind him finer than powder ! " Then turning upon Agnes, and swinging his fists over her head, with horrid oaths he charged her with intrigue and plotting against him, and taking hold of her pulled her out of the chair on the floor, telling her to say her prayers, for by the Holy Virgin Mary she should never see the morning, and giving her a kick swore that he would be the death of her, that the devil wanted her, she had lived too long already. This was too much for her proud spirit. She well knew her own innocence, and felt that she was falsely accused without the least provocation. She had worked for him day and night and had been ever a

faithful wife, and now to be so basely treated was too much. She rose to her feet, drew herself up to her full height, and looking sternly in his face, livid with rage, exclaimed —

“ Strike, coward, strike! But make sure of your first blow, or the next instant you are a dead man.”

Her teeth were clenched, and her face pale as death. He looked on her a moment, and saw firmness and determination in her countenance; his chivalrous spirit quailed before her, and he feared to strike, but flew around the room in a perfect fever of excitement, upsetting chairs, slamming doors, and raving like a madman, telling Agnes unless she confessed all, she had better not go to sleep that night, for she would have a mighty long sleep, and if she ever woke up it would be in some other country.

Mrs. Alling had nothing to confess, but repeated — not through fear, but with the hope of avoiding farther controversy at the time, and perhaps any allusion to the matter afterward — the conversation between Mr. Leroy and herself, asserting her innocence and ignorance of everything in the matter only what he already knew, saying that she did not know the man, where he lived, what his business was, or

anything concerning him, but if he would call on Mr. Leroy probably he could learn all particulars, and as he rose to go in the heat of passion, knowing his impulsive temperament, she exacted a promise that he would not strike the man, at least until he had heard his story. Some two hours elapsed, and Mr. Alling returned calm and placid as a peaceful lake; the storm in his bosom had subsided. He recounted his interview with Mr. Smith to whom he was introduced by Mr. Leroy, after telling him what he knew of the matter himself. With tears in his eyes, Mr. Alling assured his wife that he never pitied a man from the bottom of his heart as he did him, and earnestly besought her pardon for his own misconduct, at the same time telling her that Mr. Smith would call the following evening, that he had promised to introduce him, and added —

“ I could not refuse him, indeed Agnes I could not. He begged so hard to see you and explain matters to you, I felt so sorry for him I could not refuse; the man has evidently been laboring under a mistake, and now that he has found it out, he wants to set things to rights.”

The following evening Mr. Smith called, and was formally introduced by Mr. Alling, and after a short

explanation of affairs and a few common-place remarks he took his leave, not however, until he had received an earnest invitation from Mr. Alling to call as often, and whenever he felt so disposed, and to consider himself perfectly at home in his house. Once, twice, thrice, had Mr. Smith called and spent a pleasant hour with the family, engaged in conversation with Mr. Alling, chatted with Miss St. Clair, listened to the easy flowing wit of Agnes, and was enraptured by her sweet voice, as she performed some favorite air at his request.

As the "brightest flowers the soonest fade," his happiness was too great to be lasting. On the morning following the third visit, Mr. Alling sent a messenger to inform the gentleman that if he dared to call again he should kick him out of doors, and gave as a reason for so doing, that he stayed too late the night before, and kept him out of bed until after nine o'clock.

To the sensitive spirit of Mr. Smith, though a hero in many things, this was too much. He had acknowledged his misplaced affection to Mr. Alling, and only begged to be considered in the light of a friend, by the family. But when he had accepted his earnest invitation to call often, and be, as he

said, neighborly, and had done it innocently, content to occupy the most obscure corner, or endure any privation so that he might enjoy the society of Agnes for a few moments, though always in the presence of others ; — now that this pleasure was denied him, he vowed within himself that he would be revenged.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE time had now arrived that Mr. and Mrs. Alling were to take their leave of Sacramento for the Eastern States. Their furniture and housekeeping articles were sold at auction and they took up their abode for the night at the "Golden Eagle" hotel.

The afternoon was spent in making calls and paying their last adieus. On passing down K Street, on their way to the house of a friend, when directly in front of the building occupied by Mr. Smith as a mercantile warehouse, on looking up and seeing that gentleman standing in the door, apparently unconscious of their approach, Mr. Alling ran up the steps, and with clinched fist struck him in the right temple, laying him prostrate on the floor. Then, hastily descending, he drew Agnes's arm within his own and proceeded up the street as if nothing had happened.

That night was one long to be remembered. All the evil passions of Mr. Alling's nature, aggravated by liquor, were brought into requisition. Many were the oaths and execrations heaped upon his innocent wife as she lay apparently asleep, but in reality sleep came not to her eyes nor slumber to her eyelids, and the morning found her weak and exhausted. That day they sailed for San Francisco, and as the boat swung around from her moorings, away up the street a white handkerchief fluttered in the breeze.

Arrived in San Francisco, Mr. Alling suddenly changed his mind and assured his wife that he would never go to the States on her money; that he had written home again and should wait there two months, by which time he knew that he should receive remittances. Agnes remonstrated with him, but all to no purpose. In order to save expense while waiting there, they took private rooms in the upper part of the city.

Time passed on. Eating, drinking, sleeping, and scolding, was the daily routine of business with Mr. Alling. But no incident worthy of note occurred until about three weeks after their arrival in the city, when one fine afternoon Mrs. Alling was out taking

a short walk for the benefit of the air, and when about two blocks from home, on turning a corner, she came suddenly upon Mr. Smith. Up to this time she had never heard a word concerning him, and seldom thought of him. He stopped short in front of her, and speaking in a low tone said, —

“ Why Mrs. Alling, how glad I am to see you ! How have you been, and where is that villain, Mr. Alling ? ”

“ That I can not tell you,” she replied. “ Why have you followed me here ? have I not already had trouble enough ? ”

“ I would not give you pain or uneasiness for the world. You are too noble, too pure and good to be confined for life to such a man. I must know where he is. I will not, I cannot submit to such treatment from him. I will be revenged ! ” at the same time opening the breast of his coat and displaying a pair of pistols. “ And,” continued he, “ not only his unjust treatment of me, but the thought that he is wearing away your life by inches, whom I so dearly love, is more than I can bear, and if you will not tell me where he is I shall follow you to your home,” said Mr. Smith, appearing to think more of revenge at that instant than anything else.

“Very well,” replied Mrs. Alling, coolly, “if you can find him by following me, you are welcome to do so; but you must promise me before you move from this spot, by all the love you profess for me, that whenever you meet you will not strike the first blow. He is old and childish, but has given you great provocation, and if he attacks you of course you will defend yourself as best you can.”

He promised, and she went her way. Four hours passed, and the sun had sank to rest. Heavy fogs overhung the city, and a chilly dampness pervaded the air, when Mrs. Alling returned to her home, weary and breathless. In her endeavor to thwart Mr. Smith in finding their place of residence, she had passed in and out of nearly all the hotels in the city, several dry goods stores, through highways and by-ways, streets and alleys, and finally entered her house from a back passageway leading from another street.

Two days after, Mr. Alling requested Agnes to go with him to attend to a little matter of business, and on passing down Clay Street, away across the plazza a white handkerchief waved in token of recognition, but escaped the notice of Mr. Alling, after which nothing more was seen or heard of Mr. Smith for

several days. The room occupied by Mr. Alling and his wife was a back room on the ground floor, opening into a large and beautiful flower garden, at the extreme lower end of which stood a building which was occupied as a lodging house for males. Mrs. Alling began to think that she should hear nothing more from her injured friend; that his search for them had been fruitless; that he had given up the chase in despair, when one evening as she was about to retire, having extinguished the light, and on going to the window to look out as was her custom, upon brushing away the curtain, the first object that met her sight was the face of Mr. Smith, pressed against the window pane. She dropped the curtain, and with a scream staggered and fell into the easy chair. For a moment her breath was gone. Mr. Alling jumped out of bed and applied restoratives which had the desired effect, but she could give no account of the cause of her fright. Each succeeding night brought Mr. Smith to the garden where he remained concealed behind a rose-bush, geranium, or some other flowering shrub, until he caught a glimpse of his fair friend at the window, when he would wave his hand adieu and pass out of the gate, then lingered a moment to take another look and a last adieu and he was gone.

All this was unknown to Mr. Alling, but it preyed upon the mind of Agnes, and for some days she had been thinking that they must leave there to avoid farther trouble, when, one morning, the landlady came into her room, exclaiming, —

“ Oh dear, how terribly superstitious these Irish girls are ! I declare they drive me mad with so many whims and notions in their head ! What do you think, Mrs Alling ! last night Bridget went out to get some clothes which were lying on the grass, and the foolish thing came running in screaming, and declared she saw a man out there.”

“ Nonsense ! ” rejoined Mrs. Alling ; “ these Irish girls always believe in ghosts and hobgoblins, but if she did I suppose it was some one passing through to the other house.”

Although she succeeded in quieting the suspicions of the landlady, she had not the slightest doubt on the subject of Bridget seeing the man, and now she was more than ever anxious to leave the place, consequently she besought her husband to move farther down town, saying that she was tired of that place, that it was dull and monotonous.

In a few days they removed to a hotel on Sansome Street, where they took board, Mr. Alling

promising to pay when his money should arrive from the Eastern States, which would be, he thought, by the next steamer.

They had remained there in peace and quiet about two weeks, keeping pretty close in doors, neither one having much occasion to go out, when one bright afternoon all the city rallied to witness the execution of two noted criminals.

In the lower part of the city, near the water, a gallows was erected, around which were congregated the male portion of the community, of all sizes, colors, and descriptions. Stores were closed, and all business operations were suspended, the house-tops were covered with women, and the greatest excitement prevailed throughout the city. It being in the days of the vigilance committee, no one knew whose turn would come next.

Mr. Alling had wandered down the street, as he said, to see what was going on, and his wife, in company with several ladies at the hotel, was upon the top of the house looking off at the confusion in the streets. The vigilance bell was tolling out the knell of the dying criminals, and few were the merry hearts in San Francisco that day. Agnes, intently gazing down the street, thought she heard

a noise behind her, and turning round, beheld her persevering friend at the window of the observatory. Thinking to hurry him away, she ran up to him, half frightened out of her senses, exclaiming,—

“Why, Mr. Smith, what on earth are you here for? How dare you come up here? Go away this instant! If you have any regard for my peace and happiness, leave instantly! Don’t meet Mr. Alling — or one of the two must die! How dare you come up five flights of stairs in the face of such danger?”

“Dare,” he replied, “I dare meet all the fiends in the lower region. Why, I would risk my eternal salvation for you, and I will never move from this spot unless your promise solemnly to meet me to-morrow at ‘Peter Job’s ice-cream saloon,’ and allow me half an hour’s conversation.”

The establishment of “Peter Job” was one above suspicion, and Agnes gave a hurried promise that she would comply with his request; but she did not breathe freely until a few moments after she saw him on the opposite side of the street.

The next day at the time appointed, as she entered the door of the saloon, her friend, who was watching her arrival, came forward and motioned her to a seat near a window overhung with Austra-

lian vines. Creams and refreshments were served, and they chatted away for half a hour during which time he was endeavoring to persuade her that it was her duty to discard her husband forever.

"He is a brute," said he, "and unworthy the love or respect of such a woman as you."

"That may all be true," said Agnes, "but the time is not yet. I shall never leave him in California."

"He does not support you, and as near as I can learn never has. How can you stay with him, and not only earn your own living, but his, and then be abused by him?" said he.

"I have a will, sir, that laughs at impossibilities, and when I am persuaded a certain course is right, it is impossible to turn me from my purpose, and I have decided to accompany him to the States; then my course of action will depend on circumstances."

At the door of the saloon they parted. Agnes wended her way to the hotel, while her friend walked slowly and thoughtfully in an opposite direction. The room occupied by Mrs. Alling, was a third-story front room, and there she spent long, weary days, scarcely ever going out, and never receiving calls, with no amusement whatever, except it might be

Mr. Alling by her side twirling his thumbs, and muttering to himself, half the time stupefied with liquor, her hard earnings rapidly sliding away, waiting the anxiously expected remittance from home. Several days passed, and nothing was heard of Mr. Smith until at length Agnes, sitting by her window, on looking up from her sewing, discovered the veritable gentleman in a newsroom opposite, apparently engaged in reading a paper, but watching intently over the top of it, the window where she was sitting. Day after day and week after week brought him, a constant visitor, to the newsroom, where he remained if it were only to catch a glimpse of her at the window, but made no farther attempt to speak with her or annoy her with letters.

One day Mrs. Alling received a card in an unknown hand, requesting to see her in the public parlor. She descended to the room, where she met a gentleman, whom she thought she recognized as a fellow-passenger on board the "Golden Age" some eighteen months previous, but was not sure, as she had no acquaintance whatever with him. He was something above the medium height, with broad shoulders, heavy set, sandy complexion, wicked eyes, and a mouth that denoted firmness and decision; he

rose as she entered, and came forward to meet her, extending his hand with all the cordiality of an old friend, saying —

“ How do you do, Mrs. Alling? I am happy to meet you.”

“ I do not know you, sir,” she replied, starting back and looking up with astonishment.

“ My name is Wilde,” said he. Is it possible you have forgotten me! I came up from Panama with you on the steamer about a year and a half ago.”

“ Oh, yes, I recollect your face,” she replied. “ But not being acquainted, I had no occasion to remember you; but, sir, what is your business with me this afternoon?”

“ I understand madam,” twisting himself on his chair not at all pleased with her coolness, “ that you are soon to leave us for the Eastern States, and I called to ask a favor of you for a poor, unfortunate lady.”

“ Well,” replied Mrs. Alling, “ I am ever ready to sympathize with the unfortunate, and whatever I can do to assist her shall be done with pleasure. But who is it, sir, and what is the matter?”

“ You recollect,” he began “ the mysterious

family on board our steamer, the beautiful Mrs. St. John, and the two lovely children, one of which was buried at sea. Her husband, as you know, was a defaulter, and at the time was possessed of considerable means, but," he continued, with a sanctimonious look, "you know ill-gotten gains are never very lasting; so his were short-lived, and in a few weeks after landing here he found himself penniless, was turned out of his hotel, and obliged to seek shelter for himself, wife, and child in the miserable garret of a dilapidated old shanty in the upper part of the city. He is now a common drunkard, often picked up from the gutter, and taken home late in the night as good as dead. The poor woman is heart-broken, and wretched, often passing days without tasting food. She knows nothing of work of any description whatever, and therefore, is poorly calculated to meet the rebuffs of a world like this. Always having lived in affluence, she had a large wardrobe and jewels which she has disposed of one by one, these affording her a scanty subsistence hitherto. Now that she has no farther means of support, she wishes to send the child home; and hearing of your departure for the East, she begged that I would see you, and beseech you to

take the tender and delicate little Ida to her grandmother in New Jersey."

"But has she means to send the child home?" said Mrs. Alling. "And what is her idea in doing so?"

"The child's passage will be paid, madam. And the lady wished me to say to you, that remembering your kindness on board the steamer, if you would undertake the care of little Ida on the passage, and see her safe to her grandmother's, she would have no fears for her safety, and would feel under obligations to you forever; but otherwise she could not part with her."

"I should be most happy to do anything to assist her in her trouble," said Mrs. Alling. "But why did she not come to see me herself?"

"Oh, the poor woman has hardly decent clothes to appear on the street. And indeed I believe she is half crazy, crying all the time, and does not know what to do. We have advised her to send the child home, to leave her drunken husband, and get a situation to teach music, as she is highly accomplished in that, which seems to be the only thing she can do."

"We, yes we have advised her," said Agnes, to herself, but which escaped the gentleman's ear; and rising as if to leave the room, she said, —

“Very well, Mr. Wilde. Please give my kind regards to Mrs. St. John, and say that I shall be only too happy to do anything in my power for her, and will take the child home if she desires it; but I must see her and learn from her own lips what her wishes are. I will call upon her if you think best, or she may see me here.”

“I don’t think it would be advisable for you to call upon her, as she lives in such a miserable place. She does not wish any one to know where she is, but she will come and see you to-morrow.”

“Very well,” said Mrs. Alling, “I shall be happy to see her,” and the gentleman, bowing, departed.

Agnes went to her room to ponder over that one of many similar cases in the early days of California, and she thought she discovered under a silken web, a snare laid for the beautiful but unfortunate Mrs. St. John, and her course of action was soon decided upon. An interview with the lady was all she wanted, and the following day when Mrs. St. John was announced, forgetting her own troubles, she descended quickly and lightly the stairs which led to the parlor, where she found the lady, accompanied by Mr. Wilde, and a dark complexioned gentleman, named West.

Mrs. St. John was attired in what had been a plain mode colored delaine, but now so faded and worn as to almost defy recognition, with here and there a patch, and a rent which had been mended much after the fashion of a child's first attempts at sewing. A bonnet, which a couple of years before had been just in fashion. A large, ermine cape, which in the day of it had been very elegant and expensive, but now was old and dilapidated. Her face was pale and showed signs of recent tears ; her manner agitated and tremulous. After a hearty shake of the hand, and a few common-place remarks, Mrs. Alling cordially invited her to her room, as there they could talk freely and be less liable to interruption. The gentlemen became somewhat nervous at this movement, as it debarred them the privilege of hearing the conversation ; but as the ladies arose to depart, Mr. Wilde remarked quietly to Mrs. St. John, with a nod and a wink, —

“ Well — no matter, you, of course, know what to say.”

Neither the look nor the words escaped the notice of Mrs. Alling, which more than ever convinced her that she was right in her surmises. Tears flowed freely as she listened to the tale of suffering

as it fell from the lips of her friend. When she had finished, Agnes interrogated her as to her wishes. Mrs. St. John told her reluctantly that something must be done immediately ; that she had disposed of everything that she could sell ; that she knew nothing of work ; that her husband had done nothing since their arrival, but came home or was brought home badly intoxicated nearly every night ; that these gentlemen had interested themselves in her behalf, and advised her to send the child home where it would be properly cared for, and they would assist her in procuring a situation as music teacher, where she could make a handsome living for herself.

“ And I suppose,” replied Agnes, looking earnestly into her friend’s face, “ you have every reason to believe them your friends, and that they have no selfish object in view.”

“ Oh yes,” replied Mrs. St. John, “ they have kindly offered to pay little Ida’s passage beside assisting me.”

“ Poor thing ! ” thought Mrs. Alling. “ But is it your wish that the child should go ? Think well on it before you decide. Imagine yourself on the day of the steamer’s sailing, taking leave of your

only remaining child, perhaps never to meet with her again, and see if you can bear up under it."

"I had never thought of that trying moment," replied Mrs. St. John, the tears streaming down her face. "I don't think I could endure it. But then, what can I do with her? She is suffering from hunger and privation, as well as myself, and I know in my mother's house she would have every comfort. Still I would rather keep her with me if I could."

This was sufficient for Agnes, and taking her friend by the hand, she said,—

"Now my dear friend, perhaps I have seen something more of the trials and treachery of this world than you have; now let me advise you. These gentlemen whom you think your best friends are only wolves in sheep's clothing. If they were in reality your friends, as they have so kindly offered to send little Ida, your only comfort, to the States, they could pay your passage and let you go with her where you would be comfortable, instead of holding out inducements for you to remain here, to pine yourself to death as you surely would, in a land of strangers. Now, my advice is to keep the child with you. It may be the only means of reclaiming your husband. You say he has always been kind

to you, and never drank previous to coming here. Perhaps disappointment in business, or some other trouble may have driven him to it, as it has thousands before him. Don't leave him ! but try some means to keep him from bad associates, and tell your pretended friends that you have decided not to send the child home ; that if they are disinterested in their kind offer, you will accept the money which would be paid for her passage towards taking care of her here ; that she is all you have and you cannot part with her ;" and added, " have no fears, my friend, you will not be allowed to suffer."

After a few words more, and a promise to call again soon, Mrs. St. John departed. Several days passed, and nothing was heard from her.

Once and again Mrs. Alling met Mr. Wilde on the street, who looked at her with the face of a thunder-cloud, but it mattered little to her. Finally, fearing that something was wrong, as Mrs. St. John came not, Agnes went in search for her, but learned nothing concerning her, only that she, her husband, and little daughter had left for some place up in the mines.

Steamer after steamer arrived, but brought no tidings from the home of Mr. Alling. At length the proprietor of the hotel began to think it was

time to take some measures to recover the amount due him for board. He had waited for the expected remittances, until the bill had amounted to two hundred and fifty dollars; and now he determined to embrace the first opportunity to secure himself. Consequently one day when Mr. and Mrs. Alling had been out for a short walk, which was something unusual, as they unlocked their room, and stepped in, they found, to their astonishment, the room cleared of everything except what belonged to the hotel; all the trunks and baggage of every description had been removed. Mr. Alling stood for a moment as one petrified.

“What is the matter now?” said his wife, “where are the trunks?” and, looking around the room, continued, “everything belonging to us is gone.”

Her husband said not a word, but gave the bell two or three spasmodic jerks, which soon brought the waiter flying to the room.

“Tell Mr. Estes I want to see him,” said Mr. Alling, sharply.

The landlord soon made his appearance.

“What has become of our baggage?” said Mr. Alling.

Mr. Estes entered into an explanation of the matter, saying that he had waited long enough, that

he had had promise after promise, until his patience was worn out, that his terms were pay weekly, that in this case he thought he would try and accommodate them, but he saw no prospect that the money would come, and that the bill must be settled immediately.

"So you d—d scoundrel, you have locked up the trunks, have you?" said Mr. Alling, walking up and shaking his fist in his face; "you take me for some devilish poor scamp like yourself, that never had a dollar in the world, but I tell you sir, I've got enough, and I give away more every day of my life, when I am at home, than you ever had."

"That may be," said Mr. Estes, "but it is a great pity you have not got some of it here to pay your bills with."

"Pay your bills with," muttered Mr. Alling, "I'll let you see, sir, that I pay all my bills. I'm a Virginian, sir, and I'll show you, sir, that if you don't bring back those trunks it will be the worst day's work you ever did."

The landlord left, saying, "We'll see." Mr. Alling raved up and down the room like a madman for a few moments, then without saying a word went out. In half an hour he returned. Mrs. Alling had not moved from her place, but sat there quiet

and thoughtful. With the first glance at her husband's face, she saw that during that half hour he must have imbibed several times, as he was somewhat inebriated.

"What!" he stammered out, as he looked around the room, "haven't those things come up yet?" upon which he gave the bell a tremendous pull. But it was not answered until a second summons, when the boy made his appearance.

"Tell that d —— d Estes," stammered out Mr. Alling, "that I'll give him just five minutes to bring those trunks back; and if it is not done in that time, I'll throw every d —— d thing in the room out the window," saying which he sat himself down to await the result.

Agnes now saw that a storm was brewing, and she feared a terrible night, but felt that she was safe for a few moments at least, when on looking around she saw that he had fallen asleep in his chair; but he did not sleep long, and awoke imagining he had slept a couple of days; and on seeing the trunks had not been returned, began to rave and tear like one escaped from a madhouse; he rang the bell again, and again, each succeeding time telling them he would give them just five minutes to bring those

things back, or he would throw every d——d thing in the room out of the window. Presently dinner was announced —

“ D——d if I want any of your old dinner ! ” said he. “ Agnes, you had better go down to your dinner. I wont eat another mouthful in this house.”

After some persuasion Mrs. Alling descended to the dining-hall, took her dinner as hurriedly as possible, and on passing to her room, her attention was called to one of the windows of the public parlor by a lady boarder standing there, looking at something going on in the street. On entering she glanced hastily around the room, but saw no one except the lady in question, and had but just reached the window, when hearing a scuffle and harsh words, she turned around and saw her husband with fists flying in air, but only caught a glimpse of her almost forgotten lover, Mr. Smith, as he retreated down the stairs.

Agnes knew nothing of the presence of the gentleman, who was sitting on a sofa close behind the door, in low conversation with a friend from some of the mining districts, who was stopping at that house, and whom he had called to see. Just at the moment Agnes entered the parlor, Mr. Alling was on the

stairs leading up from the bar-room, where he had taken sundry drinks instead of his dinner, and followed her into the room, and looking around beheld the two gentlemen behind the door; a scuffle ensued as we have said, and Mr. Smith went flying down the stairs, and out of the house. Then going up to Agnes and taking her by the arm, with a vice-like grasp he sent her headlong across the room, saying —

“ Go up stairs, madam ! What in h—l are you here for ? ”

That evening was spent ringing the bell, threatening, swearing, upsetting the furniture, and drinking alternately, until about twelve, when he was informed that the landlord had left the house for the night, which was a mere fallacy to put him to rest. He now turned upon Agnes, and charged her with complicity in the affair with Smith, saying —

“ You thought to get him into the parlor behind the door, and I wouldn’t see him. But I tell you what it is madam, you ain’t smart enough. You’ve played at this long enough, and I won’t stand it any longer,” and staggering along up towards her, grating his teeth, with his eyes flashing fire, and the face of a demon, exclaimed : “ I’ll make mincemeat of

you, I will throw you out the window, and you may go to h—l with your d——d Smith," and making a violent pass at her, not standing very firm on his feet, he reeled, and landed against the opposite wall, but soon recovered himself, and came towards her swinging his fists, and uttering most horrid oaths.

Mrs. Alling for the first time in her life felt afraid. She quailed before him who should have been her protector, and acting on the impulse of the moment, glided past him out of the room, and hurriedly closed the door after her. The halls were dark, every one was asleep, and all was still as a house of death. Where to go she knew not, but flew along the passage, rapidly descended three flights of stairs, and gained the office, just as she heard Mr. Alling's footsteps on the upper flight, cursing, and swearing in the most horrid manner. There was no one in the office, except the night watchman, nor any signs of life anywhere about. She ran up to him, and besought him to save her.

"Put me somewhere," she whispered. "Lock me up. Do something with me. Don't let him get me. He'll kill me!"

"No he won't," said the man coolly.

"Yes, he will!" she replied. "Be quick! He's almost here! Quick, do something with me!"

The man handed her a key, and a lighted candle, saying hurriedly —

“ Run up these back stairs two flights, and at the farther end of the hall open a door with this key. It is the linen-room, and there you will find a bed,” which was all he had time to say.

She had but just escaped through the back door, as Mr. Alling entered the front one into the office, roaring and foaming like a fiend, exclaiming —

“ Where in h—l has that d——d woman gone to? Tell me, quick, or I’ll mash your d——d head for you. I’ll see if she is going to slip away from me this way ! ”

The watchman protested in the most positive terms he knew nothing at all about her, that he had not seen her.

Mrs. Alling had only time to reach the top of the first flight, when, by the sound of his voice, she knew he was coming in that direction. For fear of discovery she had already blown out her candle, and now that he was so close upon her, she felt her escape impossible. She had not much to hope from the watchman, as Mr. Alling was a powerful man, and a terror to him and every one else, and though every one hated him they were glad to let him alone,

and crouching down upon the top step, she held her breath and waited the result. Mr. Alling rushed about half way up the stairs, cursing, and swearing, but seeing no light and hearing no sound, concluded she had not gone in that direction, and turned back. As soon as he was fairly in the office, Agnes knowing that he would soon be coming up the other stairway in search of her, crept from her hiding-place up the second flight of stairs, and through the hall to the linen-room. Being in the dark, she experienced some little delay in opening the door, and had only entered the room, and turned the key inside, when she heard Mr. Alling raving through the passages, knocking on all the doors, and calling her at the top of his voice. For a half hour he sought her in every direction, but found her not, and returned to his room. She threw herself on the bed, hardly daring to breathe, where she spent a sleepless night. About nine o'clock in the morning her breakfast was brought in, and she was advised to remain quiet for the day. But about two in the afternoon, she was informed that her husband wished to see her, that he was importuning all the servants to bring her back, saying that he was convinced that they knew where she was, and promised to treat her well and kindly

for all time to come, if they would only bring her back to him.

Mrs. Alling, supposing this might be a ruse to get her into his power again, refused to go; but finally, after several visits, and earnest solicitations and assurances that he appeared perfectly harmless, she consented to see him, attended by another. On entering the room, Mr. Alling met her cordially, and she saw at once that he had recovered from his crazy intoxication, and was in his right mind. After discussing the matter for a while, a reconciliation was effected, Mr. Alling promising never to transgress again.

CHAPTER IX.

THEY now began to look into the future. What were they to do? Stay in the hotel longer they could not; neither could they get away without paying their bill or forfeiting all their goods and effects. The sum of two hundred and twenty-five dollars was all that remained of Mrs. Alling's hard earnings, and if she paid that to recover her trunks, what were they to do afterwards? But the clothing they must have, and the bill must be paid.

Mr. Estes was duly summoned and the case stated. He agreed to take the two hundred and twenty-five dollars for the bill, and give up the baggage, which he did, and preparations were now made for leaving for some place, though whither they knew not. It was at last decided to go at once to a small village in one of the valleys not far from San Francisco, and start anew in the dress-making business, as this required no capital and was the only

business that could be entered into without. But how to get there was the next question ; every dollar was gone. After some deliberation Mrs. Alling took from her neck a small gold chain and locket, which was soon disposed of, and brought just enough money to take them to the place designated. Knowing that they would be obliged to remain there for want of means to get back, Mrs. Alling determined to make the best of circumstances. Accordingly she set about fitting up a new establishment, which was done much after the fashion of the one in Sacramento. Her dignified maner and lady-like address soon inspired every one with confidence and respect, and in a few weeks she came to be looked upon as the most wonderful woman in the place. Her custom increased, and money again flowed into her coffers.

Six months rolled around, and Mrs. Alling, by dint of hard labor had saved some little money, and thinking to invest it in such a way as to bring in a good interest, she decided on opening a little store. A building was soon procured for the purpose, but it required fitting up. To do this would take nearly all of her small capital, the whole of which she wished to invest in pins, needles, dress trimmings, etc. So

sending for the owner of the building, she proposed that he should put in the fixtures, for which she would pay him an additional rent of five dollars per month. Eyeing her from head to foot, after some hesitation, he told her he did not care to do so ; that he much preferred renting the building as it was ; but that he would comply with her request if he could be sure that she would open a fine stock of goods, and stay there for a term of years and help build up the place, as he was a landholder to a considerable extent.

Mrs. Alling could only count five hundred dollars which would go but very little way toward laying in a large stock ; but she saw at once that if this fact became known she would be unable to retain the building, and her credit would be ruined in the matter of procuring goods, and that however much it might clash with her feelings, she must, for a time, at least, adopt the motto, " Self preservation is the first law of our nature," and resort to strategy. Accordingly she told the gentleman that she had not a large capital, only about two thousand dollars, but could get credit for another thousand, which, well invested, would purchase quite a nice little stock for that small place, to which she should constantly be

making additions as the trade required, and that once established in business she should probably remain some years. The gentleman readily consented and the store was duly fitted up according to her wishes; not with elegance, but with neatness and taste, and a few days subsequently he (the owner of the building) made a proposition, that as he wished to change his boarding place, he would give them the rent in exchange for his meals, saying that he wanted to assist them all he could, which was readily agreed to by Mr. and Mrs. Alling, as the saving of rent was considerable, and particularly at this time when their means were limited.

The store being ready, her next business was to proceed to San Francisco to purchase her little stock of notions, whither she went, thinking how best she might divide her five hundred dollars to make it appear like five thousand.

On arriving in San Francisco, according to Mr. Alling's injunctions, being anxious to receive letters from home, her first business was to call at the post office where she received a very neat little missive addressed to "Mrs. Agnes Alling, San Francisco, California." Hastily tearing it open, she read as follows:—

“ NEVADA CITY, 185—

MY DEAR AGNES :—

Words cannot describe the desolation of my heart. What is before me I know not; time only can tell. I know not where you are, or whether you are still struggling for roses among thorns; nor do I intend to persecute you by a long epistle. Since I last saw you in San Francisco, my life has been a blauk, my path dark and lonely. Even the elements have conspired against me. I came to this far-off city in the hope that I might forget you, but in vain. I opened a large store investing nearly all my capital, and for a time was all absorbed in business.

I suppose you must have seen ere this, by the papers, an account of the destructive fire which occurred in this city a few days since, which destroyed almost the entire place. I only escaped with my life. And as I stood alone and viewed the ruins of what a few hours before was my mercantile palace, now only a heap of smouldering ashes, I said in my heart, ‘ Oh Agnes ! Agnes ! if you could stand beside me at this moment and see the anguish of my soul, you could not but pity me ! ’ But no, I must bear it alone without even one fond assurance of your friendship. Life to me is nothing; but rest assured, my dear friend, that while this heart continues to beat, its

every pulsation is freighted with best wishes for your welfare.

Ever thine,

J. P. S."

Having no acquaintance with the merchant princes of San Francisco, Mrs. Alling had not much hopes of credit. But in this she was agreeably disappointed; for after passing in and out of several stores to ascertain where she could invest her five hundred to the best advantage, she entered one of considerable dimensions, displaying a large sign across the front of the building which read, "Millinery and Fancy Goods, Toys, Perfumery, Yankee Notions, etc." After buying showcases, boxes, and several other things really necessary to a good opening, her "pile" had dwindled down to about three hundred, and now as she entered the store of Yankee notions, so great was the variety before her, that she knew not how to select. Suffice it to say that when the bill was presented, she looked at the amount with blank astonishment, but collecting herself in a moment, repeated coolly, —

"Eight hundred dollars! Well I had no idea of buying as much as that. I just stepped in to purchase a few little things, about three hundred dollars worth;" and continued to say that she was just

opening a store up in the valley, naming the place; that she had not much capital, and had spent a part of what she brought with her for fixtures, etc., and had also been buying at other places.

“So I shall be obliged to leave a part of them, as I have only three hundred dollars with me,” she continued, and ended by saying, “Goods are much higher here than in the States.”

The gentleman stared her full in the face while she was speaking, and a quizzical smile passed over his features. Pausing a moment, he replied, —

“Well, madam, you can take the goods. We don’t know you, but the place where you have located is one of the best in the country for business. A very enterprising little town, and judging from your appearance, madam, we have no doubt you will make plenty of money there. Besides, you have an honest face, which is sufficient guarantee for the amount.”

She politely thanked him and went her way. The goods were duly sent, marked, and distributed through the store in a neat and tasteful manner. The shelves were well filled with empty green boxes which were neatly labelled, honiton, guipure, and point laces, besides many other articles, well known

in the higher walks of life, but which she was convinced the people of that place, at that day, had never heard of, and had no use for, consequently she would not be called upon to expose her empty boxes. The window was tastefully arranged with a few large bunches of artificial flowers, high colored ribbons, and fancy trimmings, and the opening day proved a success.

Dame Rumor soon circulated through the village that Mrs. Alling had opened an elegant stock of goods, far superior to anything ever seen in that place, which of course attracted every one to the store, and she was considered the richest woman in the town. Her goods were quickly sold for cash, her bills paid, and more goods purchased.

With Mr. Alling things remained about the same. The usual amount of drinking, swearing, and sleeping was attended to, but no other business whatever was attempted.

Nearly a year had passed since Mrs. Alling was proclaimed leader of fashions in the little town in the beautiful valley of Sonoma, when early one morning she was seen standing in the front door of her little store enveloped in a loose wrapper, her face white as polished marble, her lips colorless, her hair falling

loosely over her shoulders, and as she peered out in the gray of the morning with rayless eyes, she presented much the appearance of a somnambulist just risen from her dreamy couch. The street was quiet and still, having much the appearance of a deserted village after a battle. Not a face was to be seen, not a sound heard ; immense dark clouds of vapor lay along the valley, which gradually spread over the town in a chill mist, and everything was dreary and damp. Her eye wandered up and down the street, looking for some one to whom she might call. At length she saw suddenly turning the corner, the figure of an old acquaintance and customer, who now held the office of chief magistrate of the place, and with frantic gestures she beckoned him to hasten his footsteps. He hurried to the place, exclaiming —

“ Why, Mrs. Alling, what is the matter? You look like death ! ”

“ Oh ! ” she hissed through her half-closed lips, which appeared immovable, so rigid were they with fright, “ there is death inside. Do go in — go in quick ! I am sure either one or the other is killed.”

“ Who ? ” he said, as he passed by her into the store.

“ Mr. Alling and Mr. Carroll are fighting in the back room. Do go in quick,” she replied.

Passing quickly into the back room, he found the two on the floor in deadly combat, Mr. Alling being uppermost, evidently intent on making a finish of his antagonist. He had him securely by the throat, and was just in the act of dashing his brains out against a post. By this time the noise of the fall, and the sound of voices had aroused the people in the adjoining tenement, which was only separated from the scene of the conflict by a cloth and paper partition, who came rushing in, and the combatants were soon separated. Mr. Alling came off without injury except a few slight scratches, and was about to be taken to the lockup to await examination for assault and battery, at which he demurred, saying that as a Virginian, and a man of honor he thought his word should be taken for his appearance at court without locking him up. That they treated him like a thief or a robber instead of a gentleman. Then turning to the magistrate, in a soft, entreating tone, he said—

“ Judge, you know me. I have lived here among you a year. You never caught me in a lie did you? And now, if you can’t take a man’s word for his appearance at court, I think you have a mighty poor opinion of him.”

“ Well,” said the Judge, with a look that indicated he had not much to hope for from him, “ But I must follow the course of law and do my duty you know, sir, at all hazards. And sir, you must give bail in the sum of two hundred dollars for your appearance at two o’clock this P. M., or I shall be obliged to lock you up.”

Mr. Alling now called upon Agnes for the amount, promising by everything in heaven above and earth beneath not to leave the house until he went to the court room. His wife softened by his entreaties, counted out ten hard twenties, which was duly handed over to the Judge, who departed, leaving Mr. and Mrs. Alling to take their breakfast, one in silence, the other in sorrow.

Mr. Carroll, scarcely able to stand, was removed by his friends to an upper room in an adjoining building, where he lay several days in a critical condition.

The report ran through the village with the rapidity of lightning, and crowds collected about the store, the door of which was kept closed. Men of all ages, sizes, and descriptions congregated to talk over the matter; the older portion to learn the truth of the affair, the young, wild, and scandal-loving to

discuss the probability of Mrs. Alling's complicity, and to weigh the evidence against her. Soon it was whispered through the crowd that the beautiful Mrs. Alling was not so innocent after all. Then they recounted the circumstances attending the fight: That Mr. Alling had arisen very early, and gone out as was his wont for a short walk, leaving his wife asleep. That on returning about six o'clock, he had found her *en dishabille*, and Mr. Carroll the landlord in her apartment, and had given him a sound thrashing, which was all they pretended to know on the subject. This report coming to the ears of the magistrate, and one or two other restless spirits, who had often gazed on Mrs. Alling with covetous eyes, they began to arrange their plans, and devise means to bring about a separation between her and her husband; if they succeeded in doing so, they thought they would throw her entirely upon their mercy; this together with the proof they pretended to have of her infidelity, in this instance, would secure them any favors they might ask. These men were not entirely reckless, and with the sober second thought, came that of pity, and again their grosser feelings obtaining the mastery, they would recount the doings of the morning, and say she deserved no

pity, the sooner she was found out in her duplicity the better. Accordingly a committee of one, consisting of the honorable Judge, was appointed to carry their plans into execution, who called and requested a few moments' conversation with Mrs. Alling alone; when he told her he had just come from the room of the suffering man, that Mr. Carroll could scarcely speak, having had three of his teeth knocked out, and his face and head were badly swollen.

“He speaks of you in the highest terms, as of course he would,” continued the Judge, casting a curious, quizzical look at Mrs. Alling, who replied in her usual dignified manner, —

“I suppose so, sir; he has no reason to do otherwise.”

“Well,” continued the Judge, “as you are the principal witness in this case, I thought I would call upon you and learn the facts so as to know how to proceed. You are supposed to be a lady of truth and veracity, and are expected to answer as if under oath. Who struck the first blow?”

After a little hesitation she replied, —

“Mr. Alling.”

“About what time in the morning was it?”

“I think not far from six o'clock, sir.”

“Where did it occur?”

“ In the middle room, sir, where you found them.”

“ Is that used as your sleeping-room?”

“ It is, sir.”

“ Were you up and dressed before the fight took place?”

“ I was, sir.”

“ Please state, according to the best of your knowledge and belief, the circumstances of the quarrel, and the cause of it.”

Mrs. Alling commenced by saying, — that

Mr. Carroll, the landlord, had been a boarder in the family since their first occupancy of the building, that is had taken his meals with them. As they only had three rooms, — the store, the room adjoining, which they called the middle room, and which was occupied by them as a sleeping apartment, and the kitchen beyond, they had no convenience for lodging, and Mr. Carroll had slept elsewhere; but that he frequently called in for a little while in the evening to talk over the news of the village, or discuss the profit and loss of the day’s trade. And she went on to say, last evening he came in, after the business of the day was over, and finding Mr. Alling and myself in the kitchen, whither we had gone to enjoy

the warmth of the fire, as the night was chilly and damp, he sat himself down as usual, and chatted away with us for an hour on general topics. At last, Mr. Alling, thinking it was past his bed time, called out,—

“ ‘ Put up your work, Agnes, it is time to go to bed.’

“ I replied, ‘ I cannot go for an hour or two, yet. This dress must be finished and the bill made out before I sleep, as it is to be sent away by the stage early in the morning, according to promise.’

“ After a few moments Mr. Alling spoke again, this time rising,—

“ ‘ Don’t I say it’s time to go to bed ! D—n the dress ! I wouldn’t sit up nights to do anybody’s work ! ’

“ I replied, ‘ But I must, or I shall lose the sale of all the materials. The dress is worth seventy-five dollars, and you know as it is for a wedding if it does not go by the morning stage I lose the sale of it, besides disappointing my customers, and shall have it left on my hands, made up, and it will fit no one.’

“ Mr. Alling insisted that ‘ he did not care a d—n,’ and Mr. Carroll arose to go, when Mr. Alling turned to him and remarked,—

“ ‘ It is devilish strange she always has so much work to do in the night.’

“ Mr. Carroll replied, —

“ ‘ Mrs. Alling, I suppose, knows her own business and engagements better than any one else, and if every one attended to business as strictly as she does they would soon get rich.’

“ Mr. Alling’s guilty conscience did not need to be accused, as you know he has done nothing since he has been in the place, but has lived, ate, drank, and smoked at my expense,” and springing forward, he seized Mr. Carroll by the throat, exclaiming, —

“ ‘ You d—d scoundrel ! how dare you come into my house and insult me in this manner ? It is none of your business whether I do any work or not.’

“ At that moment I sprang forward, and stepping between them, said, —

“ ‘ Gentlemen, this is no time or place for a quarrel ; if you want to fight you must choose some other place.’

“ Mr. Carrol went out of the door in haste, and Mr. Alling went grumbling to bed, but not to sleep. When I awoke in the morning, about half past five, Mr. Alling was gone, and the front and back doors

were wide open. I arose, remembering that we were to have an early breakfast on account of Mr. Carroll leaving town. I hurriedly threw on my wrapper and slippers, and proceeded to the kitchen; but finding no fire, commenced preparing material for lighting one. At this time Mr. Carroll came in to breakfast.

“‘What, no fire!’ said he. ‘Where is Mr. Alling?’

“‘I don’t know,’ I replied, ‘where he is. I have not seen him this morning. I found the house all open when I awoke, but he was gone.’

“At this instant his footsteps were heard coming through the store, and the next moment he was in the kitchen. Seeing me in the act of lighting the fire, and Mr. Carroll standing by, and remembering the events of the previous evening, he muttered between his teeth, —

“‘You d—d scoundrel! you insult me in my own house again, will you?’ at the same time making a pass at him. Mr. Carroll darted by him, making an attempt to pass out the front door, but had only gained the middle room when Mr. Alling struck him, knocking him down, and the rest you know.”

“ And that is all the provocation he had, as far as you know ? ” asked the Judge.

“ It is,” she replied.

“ Very well, madam ; don’t give yourself any uneasiness. We shall try and manage this thing wisely ; ” and after saying he would see her again, he bade her good morning.

In a short time the Judge returned, and after some further questioning, said,—

“ I have had another interview with Mr. Carroll, and we know that if this case comes to trial, it will be decided against your husband. It cannot be otherwise ; and the consequence will be he will have to lie in prison for a year or two, or pay a very heavy fine, which, of course, as he has no money of his own, you would be obliged to pay, which seems too hard indeed. Now we propose to give you back the two hundred dollars, withdraw the suit, and do nothing more about it, if he will leave the place and never return.”

She looked up somewhat confused, and the gentleman continued,—

“ You know, Mrs. Alling, that he is no benefit to you and no good to the place where he lives ; but we do not wish you to go. We know you to be an

honest, industrious lady, and our wives and daughters would hardly be able to do without you ; from us you may expect every kindness and favor, and I assure you, madam, we shall do all in our power to serve you, but your husband must leave."

Agnes had long thought that somehow or other in the course of human events, something might occur which would make her free without her own agency, and which would not recoil with double force upon her devoted head. The time had now come when the separation might be effected in such a way as to leave her honor unsullied.

The proposition was made to Mr. Alling, to which he agreed. The two hundred dollars was returned, which, together with another hundred and fifty, was passed over to him. His wardrobe was hastily packed, and at two o'clock he went on board the little boat for San Francisco, much to the chagrin of many low and debased spirits, who had falsely calculated on rich developments at the trial.

Two days after, a steamer was to leave for the Eastern States, on board of which Mr. Alling had pledged himself to take passage, and his wife had promised him faithfully and secretly to follow in a few weeks, as soon as she could dispose of her goods

to advantage, and close up her business without too great a sacrifice. Thus matters stood.

The doors were again thrown open to customers, who came slowly and carefully, often passing by on the other side, and looking as if the place was infected with some contagious disease.

One bright morning, about four days after the departure of Mr. Alling, as the door of the little store was opened, a gentleman, who could not be mistaken as the sheriff of the county, stepped in, and said, blandly, —

“ Good morning, Mrs. Alling. I have a very unpleasant duty to perform this morning. I hope you will not think me uncivil.”

“ Proceed,” said she, “ with your business.”

The sheriff, drawing a paper from his pocket, commenced to read, by which she learned that her goods, fixtures, furniture, etc., were attached for the sum of three hundred dollars due to the firm of Smith, Brown, and Tompkins, of San Francisco, and he, the sheriff was authorized to take possession of the premises immediately.

“ Well,” remarked Mrs. Alling, when he had finished reading, “ you can come back in a couple of hours and I will see what can be done.”

“Come back,” replied the gentleman, “I cannot go. I must stay and keep possession of the store, and take care of the goods.”

“Oh, you must,” said she. “Very well, then. I have no objections, sir, to your sitting here if you remain quiet and attend strictly to your business, but if not, I shall most decidedly object.”

“Your husband, I believe,” remarked the sheriff, “has left for the Atlantic States.”

“Do you, indeed?” said Mrs. Alling; “well, I suppose you have a right to your belief. But that is not connected with your business here this morning. Whether he has or not, that matter is not to be discussed, sir. You will please attend strictly to your own affairs, and leave mine to myself.”

On receiving information that one of the firm of Smith, Brown, & Tompkins was in town, Mrs. Alling sent to request an interview, which after several urgent appeals was granted. From that gentleman she learned, after much careful questioning, that he had heard of the disgraceful quarrel that had taken place, that Mr. Alling had been driven from the place, and had gone to the States; and added, “that he had also heard that she had sold out and was soon to follow him, and that he had taken this

means to ascertain if such was the case, and to secure himself."

Mrs. Alling very quietly told him that such was not the case; that she still owned the store, and hoped to for some time to come; that his money was ready for him, and that he would have saved himself trouble by calling for it instead of resorting to legal measures."

The bill was duly paid, the attachment withdrawn, and the sheriff departed, the firm of Smith, Brown, & Tompkins paying the costs as a penance for their foolish haste.

Mrs. Alling, again left to herself, wondered what would come next in the routine of her trials and suffering; but scarce had the sun began to sink behind the western hills, and to shed its feeble rays upon the summit of the range which bordered the eastern side of the valley, than the magistrate made his appearance.

"I understand," said he, to Mrs. Alling, after the usual compliments of the evening were passed, "that you are in trouble; and as I promised to befriend you, and to render you all the assistance in my power, I have come to see in what way I could serve you."

“Very kind,” said Mrs. Alling, with a look of sarcasm, for she was aware that he knew full well that the whole matter was settled and the bill paid, as scarcely anything transpired in the village of the least consequence without his knowledge. “You are too late; your services are not needed,” she continued.

“It is only a few moments since I heard of it,” he remarked. “I am sorry for your affliction, but trouble never comes single handed; but,” he continued, laying his hand in a familiar manner on her shoulder, “my dear girl, whenever you are in trouble you can depend upon me as your friend at all times and in all places;” and with a forced smile added, “you understand, I will be the best friend you ever had. I have it in my power to do much to promote your interest in a pecuniary point of view, as well as to lay the tongue of scandal at rest.”

“I am aware, sir,” she replied, “that you occupy a prominent position; that your word would go far in favor of or against me, and that you have the power to do much to further my interest, both in trade and in the good opinion of the people; but you cannot do it without a sacrifice or laying yourself

liable to criticism, which gentlemen in your standing and situation are not apt to do without remuneration of some kind, which I am not able to give."

"I do not wish any remuneration," he replied, "but would be only too happy to serve you. But tell me, my dear girl, do you stay here alone nights without a protector?"

"Why do you ask that question? Certainly I stay alone. And I need no protector sir, other than my God, myself, and my trusty six-shooter."

"But surely you would not use that weapon against a friend. Women of your temperament whose husbands are absent cannot do without some friends, and if one who you knew to be your friend, and who loved you, should call upon you even at an unseasonable hour in the night for instance, you surely would not shoot them! For my dear girl if by any possibility you should escape the law, in such a case, did you ever think what your feelings must be, a tender, delicate woman at the thought of having killed a man, that man a friend too."

Mrs. Alling's face grew livid with rage. She rose to her feet, and drew herself up to her full height in front of the Judge with her arms folded, and her

dark eyes flashing a strange, unearthly fire, muttered through her clenched teeth —

“A friend, who loves me! — shoot — escape the law — ha — ha! I defy the law sir, and everything pertaining to it, if there is no law to protect an innocent woman, I’d protect myself and the integrity of my purpose would steady my hand to take sure aim. And when my victim lay weltering in his gore, I should say ‘Die villain! — you have lived too long already!’ And in my last, declining years I should look back with satisfaction upon the deed as one in which I defended myself from the assaults of an infamous wretch who was designed by God to be a protector of the weaker sex.” Then pointing to the door, she continued : “Now go home, you scoundrel, to your beautiful and lovely wife, who believes you true to her, and tell her in penitence that you have insulted an innocent and defenceless woman, who was before weighed down with many sorrows. Go, you scoundrel, this instant!”

The magistrate unable to speak, dumbfounded with shame, and wholly unprepared for such an appeal, rose and quietly left the house, and Mrs. Alling was again left to herself. But not until Sleep applied her sweet restoratives to her trembling frame

could she command her strained nerves, or bring her mind back to its wonted quiet peacefulness.

The morning dawned. The events of the preceding day appeared to Mrs. Alling as a hateful dream. She went through the business of the day with her usual cheerfulness; pleasant and agreeable to her customers, and none knew or thought that care ever disturbed her tranquillity, or that trouble found a lodgment in her bosom. Time passed on; trade revived, and Mrs. Alling was again prospered and apparently happy. Her store was always closed at dark, and she retired to the middle room or the kitchen, to execute what remained unfinished among the orders of the day. Some six weeks had passed since the departure of Mr. Alling, and nothing had been heard from him by any one in the village. Mr. Carroll had recovered from his injuries, and was again attending to business. The nine days' wonder of the fight had passed, and other startling incidents had apparently crowded it out of the minds of the people, when late one evening, as she was sitting beside the little table in the kitchen, on which lay sundry pieces of ribbons, lace, flowers, etc., from which she was making a beautiful head-dress for one of her lady customers, she thought she heard the

sound of footsteps outside the door which led from the kitchen into the yard, and only a few feet from where she was sitting. The kitchen was without windows, in consequence of the close proximity to buildings on each side, and was only lighted by a large window in the door, which was hung with a white cloth curtain, leaving a space at the top of about four inches ; the doors front and back were bolted, and everything secured for the night. It was eleven o'clock ; still Mrs. Alling worked on, stopping occasionally to look with admiration at a bunch of flowers here or a bow there, in the design of the head-dress, when the sound of footsteps caught her ear. Her first impulse was to look up ; but the next was to appear to be more intent on her work. The sounds increased, and soon there was the clatter of many feet intermingled with loud whispers, and occasionally the sound as of a stone, or log upon which they had elevated themselves rolling from under their feet letting them suddenly down upon the ground. Well did Mrs. Alling feel the presence of invisible spirits, and for aught she knew demons were peering in at her over the top of the curtain. From unmistakable sounds she knew full well that the house was surrounded ; but by

whom or with what intent she knew not. Still she worked on, not seeming to notice anything passing without, until a sound came as of a foot scraping against the door, and looking suddenly in that direction she saw plainly visible the woolly head of a half African, half Arab, who rejoiced in the title of the barber of the town, and who from long residence and prosperity, had learned to look upon himself as one of the first inhabitants, and decidedly necessary to the existence of the place. She moved not, neither appeared to see anything, and presently the sounds were gone, and her work being finished, she retired to rest to ponder over the strange events of the evening. On the following day a friend whose husband and brother was in the mysterious company of the previous night, called upon her, and after a few common-place remarks, inquired if she knew the terrible danger she passed through the night before.

“ I don’t know,” replied Mrs. Alling, “ what you refer to. I know we are in more or less danger everywhere. I never feel perfectly safe. Was I in more danger last night than usual? ”

“ I should say you were,” replied her friend. “ I should think so, if it had been me. Did you not know that the house was surrounded by fifty men armed to the teeth with knives and pistols? ”

"I did not," replied Mrs. Alling, in her usual cool manner. "And if I had it would not have frightened me; for I have injured no one, and they surely have no reason to hurt me."

"No, certainly not," replied the lady. "It was not you they wanted, but a report had been circulated late in the evening that Mr. Alling was seen coming up on the boat, and was secreted here in the house. And they were going to break in and take him out and lynch him."

"Why did they not do it," said Mrs. Alling with apparent indifference. "They might have had a pleasant time. I should have been good for six of them at least, unless my Colt's revolver missed fire."

"Well," replied the lady, "they hesitated whether to do so or not; and gave as a reason for not doing so, that they looked in at the window and saw you sitting alone hard at work at that late hour, and apparently unconscious of all that was going on without, and they had not the heart to disturb you."

"Well," she replied, "I am much obliged to them for their kindness. But Mr. Alling was not here, neither have I heard from him since he left here, and expect he has arrived in the States before this time."

The lady took her leave, and Mrs. Alling indulged in a hearty laugh at the thought of her Colt's revolver of which she was not the possessor, nor ever had been; nor was she sure that she had sufficient courage to use one if it were at her command

CHAPTER X.

“WELL, now, I'll be d——d if I don't go if there's five hundred cannons pointed at me. I'll be d——d if I don't see my wife once more in spite of you,” shouted a voice which had long since ceased to be heard in the little town of the valley of Sonoma. It was near dusk. Mrs. Alling was sitting alone quietly sipping her tea, thinking over the events of the day, and looking forward to the time when she should set sail. Busied with thoughts of her Eastern home, anticipating a happy meeting soon to take place with her mother, and wondering if half the story of her suffering and trials in that far-off land of gold would be believed, when suddenly an unmistakable voice fell on her ear. She arose and ran to the door, when lo, to her astonished gaze was exhibited the form of Mr. Alling, half inebriated, covered with rags, carpet-bag in hand, trudging up the hill towards the house.

"I'll be goll-dinged if I don't see her now," and catching a glimpse of her standing in the door, he made his way as fast as he could, exclaiming: "Agnes, Agnes, I was determined to see you once more; if there had been a thousand cannons pointed at me I would come," and giving a kick with one foot while he stood reeling on the other, shouted, —

"Clear out you young scoundrels! Begone, or I will twist the heads off every one of you," referring to about twenty or thirty boys between the ages of seven and twenty who had followed him the entire distance from the landing to the house laughing, shouting, and hurrahing at the top of their voices. Mrs. Alling stood aghast; she was entirely unprepared for such a scene, and trembled lest his presence in the village might prove ruinous to both. Recovering herself a little she inquired, —

"Where did you come from? What did you come for? And why did you come just at this time when I was so soon to leave here? Have we not had trouble enough in this place already? I wanted to get out of it as easily as I could, and leave a good name behind me; but now I don't know what will be the result."

"Never you fear," stammered out Mr. Alling as

he reeled through the store. "Never you fear, Agnes, I'll fight your battles for you. I'll show 'em that old Virginia ain't a going to be beat. I was a d——d fool for being driven off before, and that's a fact. But now I'll show 'em that I'll fight every inch of the ground. I'll be d——d to d——n if I don't stay here as long as I please!"

Four months had rolled around since Mr. Alling left his home, and men and things in the little town had materially changed. Mr. Carroll had disposed of all his property, and bade adieu to the Pacific coast. Several of the most impetuous spirits in the lynching affair had removed from the place, and as usual in such cases, the ring-leaders gone, no one cared to take the first step in such a movement; besides Californians act much from impulse, and if a ruffian escapes the hand of justice for a few days, he is frequently let to go unpunished, until by another overt act of villainy the indignation of the people is again aroused. Consequently Mr. Alling found none to molest him, and he sat himself down in quiet. In answer to Agnes' inquiries as to where he had been during his absence, and how he employed his time when she supposed him far away in the Eastern States preparing a home to receive her, when her toils were over on that Western slope, he replied, —

“ Why you see Agnes, when I left here and went to San Francisco, I decided not to go home by the first steamer. Thought I'd wait a little, and one day as I was walking down the street seeing what I could see, I met a man from here who told me I was a fool to go home. That this was the best country in the world to make money. That I had better come right back up here, and settle down, and make some money before I went home.”

“ Yes,” she replied, “ I suppose he wanted to get you into trouble again ; he wanted excitement.”

“ Well,” continued Mr. Alling, “ I thought I would not come just then at any rate ; I would wait till the affair blew over. So I stayed and stayed on, and kept out of sight of folks as much as possible ; and Agnes,” he continued, in a whining, half crying tone, “ I hated the worst kind to spend the three hundred and fifty dollars you gave me, and a good many times would go without eating to keep the money to bring back to you. I knew you worked hard for it, and I hated to spend it, the worst way, but I had to spend some of it. I tried to get something to do to pay my board, to keep the money for you, but every one said I was too old a man to work ; they did not like to see a man of my

age at work ; and besides, Agnes, I was sick. I had that terrible pain in my side which I have had so many times, you know ; and it followed me for several days, till at last one night I was so bad I was afraid to sleep alone ; I thought I'd die before morning, and I didn't like to be alone, so I walked out in the street, and after a little while met a right honest-looking boy about fourteen or fifteen years old, and asked him to come and sleep with me."

" How dare you ? " said Mrs. Alling, " pick up any one in the street that way ? How did you know but he was a thief, or had the smallpox or some other terrible thing ? "

" Well I soon found out," he replied, " for when I woke up in the morning he was gone, with my overcoat, pocket-book, and all my money, three hundred and twenty-five dollars."

" Well," she replied, " it is no more than you might expect. I should think a man of your age who had seen as much of the world as you have, would be prepared for such things and take better care of your money than that."

" Come, come, Agnes, don't scold me. I am here, aint I, safe and sound, and what more do you want ? I'll fight all your battles for you ; but I tell you

I had a right hard time of it after the money was gone, knocking about from pillar to post, getting a little to eat here and a bite there until I came back, and after I started I was advised by people on the boat not to come up here, but I told them I'd be d—d to — if I did not come if there was a hundred cannons pointed at me; and here I am, and here I am going to stay as long as it suits me, and I'll fight your battles for you, Agnes, — you needn't be afraid."

Mr. Alling remained quiet for some time, staying mostly in doors until it became generally known that he was there, when he gradually made his appearance on the street, with as much defiance in his looks as ever, but met with no opposition.

Another year passed by without any event as far as Mr. Alling was concerned, to disturb the peace and harmony of that quiet little town, or arouse the indignation of its inhabitants, until one day bills were posted through the streets on every fence and vacant corner announcing a grand concert to take place that evening, the principal performers to be two men, a lady, and two little girls, which duly came off according to programme.

On the following morning, a restless spirit who

was dying for excitement, accosted Mr. Alling, with—

“ Did you attend the concert last evening ? ”

“ No,” replied Mr. Alling, “ I seldom go to such places. I don’t care much for music.”

“ Well,” said the man, “ you ought to have been there, you would have heard something rich.”

“ Well,” replied Mr. Alling, snapping his fingers, and turning to walk on, “ I reckon it is not of much consequence.”

“ But,” said the man, “ you missed a good thing, something about yourself.”

At this Mr. Alling stepped back a step or two to inquire how he could be mixed up with the affair, or his name called into question, that, too, by strangers and without his knowledge or consent. He could not see what they could say about him, and reckoned the man must be mistaken. The individual before him entered into an explanation as far as to say that they sung what they called a local song, and in it the name of Mr. Alling occurred quite frequently ; that it was an insult, and should not be passed by unnoticed, especially by a gentleman of his dignity and standing.

Mr. Alling remarked that he reckoned the man

must be mistaken, and walking home, sat himself down in a dark corner to think how best he might punish the offenders. After sitting a short time, he rose and walked deliberately down to the little hotel and inquired for Mr. Taylor, but not finding him, left a message to the effect that he was not to leave the town without first calling on him.

A half hour passed and Mr. Taylor did not appear, and Mr. Alling again went to the hotel and learned, to his astonishment, that his bird had flown, that Taylor had gone in his own conveyance, with all his effects, on to the little town of Sonoma where he was to perform that evening.

Mr. Alling, without speaking a word to his wife, passed through the house and out to a livery stable some little distance in the rear. A fleet horse was soon saddled and bridled, and he, with a huge club concealed under his overcoat, rode swiftly away. It was spring, and the heavy rains of the winter had made the roads in some places almost impassable, and in many of the ravines horses would sink nearly to the stirrups.

Two hours passed, and Mr. Alling returned, bespattered with mud from head to foot, and sat himself down quietly as if nothing had happened.

Upon inquiry it was ascertained that he overtook the parties some four miles out of town, dragged the man from the carriage, and beat him most unmercifully, amid the cries and screams of the woman and children, and the entreaties of his male companion. He then mounted his horse and rode deliberately back to town, saying, as he entered the house, "that he reckoned they would never come there again, and he'd learn them better than to leave the place again without coming to see him." Upon further inquiry it was ascertained that they had committed no crime, except as was their custom in all places, to sing a song composed for the occasion in which they introduced all the prominent persons of the place, and to which none took exceptions except Mr. Alling. The troupe of Taylor & Co. was never again seen in the little town during the residence there of Mr. Alling.

Another year passed, and it was rumored that Mrs. Alling was very wealthy; that she had made a rapid fortune, and was the richest woman in the place. But not so; for although by dint of economy, and hard labor early and late, she had gathered together considerable of the glittering dust, yet when her bills were paid, which was always promptly done,

she was by no means rich, but began to feel in comfortable circumstances. Her little store was paying well, and her surplus funds were so invested outside, as to bring her a good interest. And feeling that her health was suffering from long-continued exertions, she decided in her own mind for time to come, not to confine herself so strictly to business. Accordingly towards the beginning of summer when the spring trade in that locality was about over, it was decided to close the store for a few days, and take a trip up through some of the mining towns to gratify a desire to see something of the State, as well as to enjoy the cool, bracing air of the mountains. Accordingly one fine morning, Mr. and Mrs. Alling equipped with all the necessaries for a pleasure trip, started on their way. They proceeded by boat to Sacramento, where they were joined by another lady and gentleman by appointment. Dr. Farr had been a fellow-passenger with Mr. and Mrs. Alling some four years previous from New York to San Francisco, and the acquaintance had never been relinquished. He was located in Sacramento, where his father, only a few months deceased, had acquired considerable celebrity in his profession, and now the son, Dr. Farr, Jr. very naturally succeeded him in

practice. He was about twenty-six years of age, black eyes and hair, small of stature, and very impulsive, speaking quickly, and to the point, and had but a few weeks since returned from the Eastern States with his bride. Mrs. Farr was about twenty-two, with flaxen hair cut short at the neck, light blue eyes, round baby face, and clear complexion. She was somewhat stouter than her husband, quiet and unassuming in her manner, with very little of decision or expression in her countenance, reminding one of a cold mixture of milk and water. Such were the travelling companions of Mr. and Mrs. Alling.

The rainy season was over, and the sun shone forth in all its splendor. The mud was dried up and everything in nature looked beautiful. The first twenty miles after leaving Sacramento was a perfect Eden ; the road was straight, level, and smooth, without a stone of any size or description on either side. As far as the eye could reach, flowers of every kind and shape, of the deepest and richest hues grew luxuriantly, reminding one of a magnificent carpet spread at the grand banquet of some Eastern monarch. About two in the afternoon, they arrived at the base of the mountain up which lay the road

which led to Jackson, Amador County, a town of about two dozen old, tumbled-down houses. The most noted feature of the place pointed out to travellers, was an old tree called "hangmen's tree" from the branches of which it is said five men were hung at one time. At this town our travellers rested for the night, and were duly entertained with the various amusements of the place such as half-naked digger squaws, with dirty papooses lashed to a board on their back, marching and countermarching before the door of the hotel, Indians, Chinese and Mexicans, twisting themselves into various shapes, and appearing to try in every imaginable way to entertain the new comers. The next morning they proceeded to Moquelemme Hill, a mining town of considerable note, farther up the mountain. A few days was spent in visiting different places of interest in the vicinity, and our party were returning. The conversation along the road turned upon the subject of the notorious bands of robbers which it was said infested those mountains.

"What if they should capture us," said Mrs. Alling.

"No fear of that," replied Dr. Farr, smiling, "there are none here now, the band has been broken up since their leader, Joaquin, was killed."

"I don't know," she replied, "whether that is so or not, every few days we see accounts in the paper of persons being robbed, and left for dead along the road, teamsters killed, and their horses turned loose, stages robbed, and all manner of depredations committed, and the perpetrators are never known; yet I think they belong to Joaquin's band, which if it does not actually exist in a body, the members of it are prowling about the country and committing robberies and murders on their own responsibility."

"Well," said Mr. Alling, "you need not be afraid, I'll protect you."

"Yes, you'll protect us," said she, laughing, "you haven't so much as a pocket-knife, to say nothing of revolvers and other weapons;" upon which Dr. Farr remarked that in his hurry he had neglected to bring his pistols, that he did not see how he could have forgotten them, as he always wore them in going about the town, and it was strange he should forget them in coming away, and added,

"Oh! I don't suppose there is any danger, or any need of weapons of any kind." So they chatted on until they reached the highest point of the mountain, where stood a little cabin of one room, over the door of which was a large sign which read, "Moun-

tain Spring House, Refreshments Here," and in front, near the side of the road, was a trough dug out of a huge log, into which constantly poured a small stream of water, conducted down the side of the mountain. Two men were sitting quietly on horseback waiting for their animals to drink, and conversing the while with the man of the inn, who stood beside them. Our little party rode up, intending to give their horses refreshment in the way of a drink from the mountain spring, but seeing the place already occupied, and not much impressed in favor of the occupants, rode on in silence. The two men on horseback could not but attract more than a passing notice. One, apparently about thirty years of age, had keen, black eyes, long black curly hair, heavy moustache and imperial, and red cheeks; he was dressed in a suit of black, a velvet Spanish doublet thrown gracefully over his shoulders displaying a lining of orange-colored silk, a black slouched hat with three small feathers fastened by a crescent studded with glittering stones. He was mounted on a Spanish saddle of the finest material, inlaid with silver, the cloth and all the trappings of the richest texture and workmanship, and hung with heavy silk fringe. The horse was small, black, and restless.

His companion was attired far differently, with blue pants, gray flannel shirt, and Panama hat; the inn-keeper, with whom they were in close conversation, had the appearance of a man suited to all kinds of work, at all times, and in all places; who could keep a sharp look out for all passers-by, and give information concerning them, and if occasion required, administer refreshments in such a way as to put a quietus on all further developments. At this time he appeared to be communicating by nods, gestures, and occasional words, something concerning the equipage just passing.

As soon as they were out of hearing, Mrs. Alling spoke in a half serious, half laughing tone, "There are the robbers, now, they are nearer than I expected and from the dress, I judge one of them to be the bandit chief, Joaquin himself."

"No fear of that," muttered Mr. Alling, "you are always surmising something;" and the doctor joined in with —

"Why, Joaquin is dead long ago; these mountains were scoured for months and months in search of him, and a large reward offered for his head, which was brought into Sacramento and identified."

"So I have heard," replied Mrs. Alling, "and as often heard it contradicted."

"So have I," rejoined the doctor, "but there is no doubt in my mind of his death." Then turning and looking back along the road, bursting into a laugh, he continued, "Well, Mrs. Alling, where are your robbers? I don't see them coming."

"Robbers to be sure," muttered Mr. Alling, "there is no robbers about it, I would not be so foolish if I were you, Agnes!"

"Don't be in too big a hurry," said she, "they will overtake us soon enough." Presently turning, she exclaimed, "There they come, there they come! begin to say your prayers for they are after you."

The gentlemen looked in the direction indicated, and saw a cloud of dust rolling up, through which they could faintly distinguish the forms of the two men coming on rapidly.

Mrs. Farr now spoke for the first time and asked, "Doctor do you think they are robbers? what will we do if they are? they will kill us all, and you have nothing to defend us with."

"No, robbers no, certainly not," replied her husband. But neither of the gentlemen showed any disposition to laugh; the lash was applied and the horse's pace quickened as much as possible, but the carriage was large and lumbering, and the fleet horses

of the robbers, for such they were, soon overtook them, and coming up on either side of them slackened their pace, and looked quietly in at the ladies. Escape was impossible, and resistance out of the question ; the gentlemen were livid with terror, but neither spoke or exchanged looks, but drove on as usual. Mrs. Farr, shuddering, drew herself close to her companion, scarcely daring to breathe, while Mrs. Alling recoiled as her eye met their piercing glances, and her heart stood still at the thought of immediate death. For some moments they jogged along beside the carriage, speaking a few words across in Spanish, none of which was understood except, "*Mucho bonita señoritas,*" indicating that they were very pretty young ladies, then falling back, allowing the carriage to pass, they walked their horses for some time, engaged in earnest conversation. They rode along in this manner for some little distance, evidently conferring with each other as to the best method of disposing of their prey ; then putting spurs to their horses, they soon came up with the travellers, but this time exchanged sides, and rode along by the side of the vehicle peering in with eager curiosity at the ladies, without seeming to notice the gentlemen, who sat bolt upright without speaking or looking to the right or the left, evidently

awaiting their fate. When their curiosity was satisfied they fell back again for further consultation.

Our travellers began to breathe more freely, and to exchange an occasional word in a low tone, and as they had gained considerably on them and had got pretty well down the side of the mountain they began to think the robbers did not think them worth taking, as they could discover no baggage or booty of any kind. They had arrived at a point in the road where a footpath led off in an opposite direction through the woods down into a dark ravine, and looking back they discovered the robbers coming at full speed. Simultaneously with the clang of hoofs was heard the sharp crack of a pistol. At the same instant one of the robbers sprang to the horses' heads, stopping the carriage so suddenly that Mr. Alling rolled from his seat on to the ground, apparently lifeless. Dr. Farr, who made some little show of resistance, was dragged from the carriage and severely beaten about the head and face, and left for dead. The shrieks of the ladies reverberated through the wood and echoed in the distant hills, again and again; when the strong arm of the robber Chieftain, holding his pistol in one hand, managed to draw a bandage tightly over Mrs. Alling's eyes, not

however, until she beheld her friend placed on horseback in a state of insensibility, but held firm in the grasp of the ruffian. Then she was assisted to mount the swift steed of the robber Chieftain, who, muttering some incoherent words, with a smile of triumph, seated himself in the saddle, taking her in his arms with her hands behind her. The two robbers, with their precious booty, dashed off down the footpath which led into the ravine, almost with the rapidity of lightning, leaving the carriage, horses, and what they thought the dead bodies of the two men, to the mercy of the passers by.

On they dashed, down precipices, over the trunks of fallen trees, leaping deep ravines, through thick underbrush, around the base of craggy rocks, far into the mountain passes, through deep gorges, and dreary ice-cold caverns, until at length they dismounted. For some little distance they walked, or rather crept along a rugged, half-beaten path, around the base of huge, broken rocks, until they came to a small aperture through which they passed with difficulty, and then descending some half dozen tottering, natural stone steps, turned to the left, and continued on for a short distance ; then again turning, a narrow, irregular entrance led into a wide

passageway, lighted at intervals by small natural openings in the earth above, at the end of which, descending a couple of steps, they entered a room about ten feet square, out of which were doors leading in opposite directions. The one at the right opened into a spacious apartment ; the roof of which being composed of earth not more than two feet in thickness, was upheld by timbers and rude planks roughly hewn out of trees of the forest ; the floor was of earth trodden down hard, presenting much the appearance of dark clay baked in the sun ; an old-fashioned, richly-carved settee, covered with hair-cloth, a low bedstead, bed, white counterpane, linen sheets and pillow-slips trimmed richly in lace, two or three chairs, a table and sideboard, composed the furniture of the room. Around the walls were hung miserable daubs of the Virgin Mary, the crucifixion, and Saint Peter with a huge bunch of keys, besides some of the saints of more modern days. On the sideboard were displayed, in rich profusion, Spanish wines and liquors of various kinds. This was the private apartment of the robber Chieftain. The door leading to the left opened into a large hall or room finished much as the former, and apparently used as a banqueting hall on grand occasions when

the band was called together. They numbered as near as could be ascertained, about five hundred, and were divided into separate parties, each party having a rendezvous of their own.

Mrs. Alling and her companion were ushered into the private apartment of the robber Chief, the bandage was removed from their eyes, their captors leaving them instantly. They had received such a shock with fright, and were so exhausted with their unearthly ride through forest and glen, that they had scarce power to move, and when left to themselves, were only too happy to rest their weary frames, and showed no desire to make an examination of the place.

Mrs. Alling seated herself in a rude but curiously wrought arm chair, near the corner of the room. Her lady friend, timid and terrified, sat herself down on a low stool at her feet, laying her head confidingly on her lap, as if she was all powerful to save. No words other than comfort escaped Mrs. Alling's lips. Cool and calculating to the last degree, she began to turn over in her mind the chances of escape, though far away in the wild mountain passes, in a subterranean retreat, which had baffled all the powers of traders, trappers, and civilians, to discover, through

long weeks of weary search, notwithstanding which she felt that they should be rescued ; that though now in the power of a miserable outlaw, whose fingers had dripped with the blood of many defenceless fellow-beings, they should not long continue thus, or be left to die by the hands of a merciless bandit. A rainbow-hued Chinese lantern was suspended from the ceiling, but emitted no light. It was about dusk and the apartment was quite dark. Nothing was to be seen or heard ; not the vibration of a footstep or the sound of a voice to break that awful stillness.

Mrs. Alling sat with closed eyes speculating as to how the morning would find them, and the probable result of the next interview with the robbers, when the door opened, and a short, stumpy female, bearing a lighted candle entered ; the face, as the light shown full on it, appeared to her as the face of one whom she had seen somewhere in former years, but when or where, in her bewildered state of mind, she could not conjecture. The old lady had set her candle upon the table and was in the act of passing out without so much as deigning a look at her fair prisoner, when Mrs. Alling sprang in front of her, clasping her hands, and looking tenderly in her face said, —

“ Tell us, good lady, tell us, I pray you, where we are, and what is to be done with us ? ”

The woman started back as if appalled by something unearthly, and gazing at her a moment, caught her in her arms, exclaiming in broken English, "Why, my dear child, how came you here? why I know you, don't you remember me? where have you been? and how do you do? Don't you know me? in Acapulco I was, you took dinner there when the young Mexican officers were coming away."

"O yes, O yes," she replied, "I remember you well, and have often thought of you, and wondered why you cried when we left; now you will be a friend to us, won't you? But tell me," she continued eagerly, "where are we, and what will be done with us! I am so glad to see you here."

"You are in the retreat of the noted Bandit Chief Joaquin, and what he will do with you I do not know."

"Will he kill us?" she inquired.

"No, I hope not, he seldom takes the life of a woman, and keeps his men from doing so as much as possible; he is not here all of the time, his wife is down in Mexico with her father, and he goes down to see her occasionally; but there are some very, very bad men in his band, who, when he is gone do as they please, there is Cross-eyed Tom, Surly Bill,

Three-fingered Jack, and several others, the worst men, and the most cruel that ever lived, and when the Chief is away sometimes do dreadful things."

"Do they? will they hurt us!" exclaimed Mrs. Farr, crouched down in the corner.

"I hope not," said the woman, "but it's hard telling. I am more afraid of them than of the Chief. But how came you here?"

Mrs. Alling recounted as briefly as possible the story of their little trip into the mountain towns, how they were pursued, overtaken, and captured by the robbers, saying "that she believed the horses were possessed with evil spirits, as they flew over the cliffs with the rapidity of the 'Wild horse of Tartary,'" and added, "that she did not know why he should wish to capture them as they had no money."

"Money is nothing to him," said the woman, "he has more gold than he can count, and as for fleet horses, he never saw the half of what he owns."

"But how came you here?" inquired Mrs. Alling.

"You perceive," said the woman, "that I am an American, although not much like one now, my husband was a sea captain, and having no children, I usually accompanied him to sea. Some twenty years ago we were wrecked on the Pacific coast, the

vessel became a total loss, and all hands perished except my husband, myself, and a negro boy ; we made our way to Acapulco without money, clothes, or anything else. My husband soon afterwards died, leaving me in a strange land, without money or any means of subsistence. For a time it was very hard for me to get into the ways and customs of the natives, but having no means of getting away, I made up my mind to make the best of it, and stay there. Not many months after my husband's death, I married a young Spaniard, who was of a grade higher than the natives, who was not so lazy, and indolent like, but wanted to get rich and live more respectable. With the hope of making a new home, he left for California, leaving me behind, until he should come or send for me. Years and years went by, and he did not come, neither did I hear from him, I thought that he was dead ; at last he came, and brought me here ; he is one of this band of robbers."

" When I parted with you in Acapulco, you said we should meet again, but I did not think it would be in such a place as this. I did not know that we should," replied Mrs. Alling, " but I said it to pacify you, as you was weeping."

" I know it," said the woman. " I cried to think

of my own home where I lived when a girl away off in the United States ; of my mother there, and father, that they never knew what became of their child, and that I should never be young and free again, like you."

Just then the voice of the Bandit Chief was heard calling, "Bertie, Bertie," who quickly obeyed the summons. He bade her receive directions concerning the care of his prisoners, saying that business of great importance and wholly unexpected, called him away for a few days, and continued, "Take good care of my birds, and see that they do not escape ; keep them in the inner room, and make them as comfortable as possible, but by all means keep them secure. Do you hear," said he, chucking the old lady under the chin.

"I hear," she replied, "but what if Three-fingered Jack or Surly Bill should see them, what am I to do?"

A slight shade passed over the features of the Bandit Chief, as the name of Three-fingered Jack fell on his ear, remembering the cruelties he had practised at different times, when he was absent from the retreat, not only upon stout-hearted, sturdy men, but upon inoffensive females, but rallying in a mo-

ment said. "No fear from them, no one knows of their presence here except Mike, who helped me to bring them hither, I shall give him orders enjoining the strictest secrecy; but I must see what state my little ones are in, expect they are lonesome," said he with a smile of triumph, saying which, he opened the door, and passed into his apartment.

Simultaneous with his entrance, Mrs. Alling rose and stood before him with the haughty dignity of a queen; and her companion fell upon her knees at his feet, beseeching him to spare her; taking her by the hand he kindly lifted her up saying, —

"Stand up my young friend, I am not going to harm you, hope you have recovered from the fatigue of your ride?" And in answer to the inquiry whether he would kill them, he answered in a playful manner, "O no, my lovely friends, you are too pretty for anything of that sort." Passing his arm around Mrs. Alling he drew her closely to him, and kissed her several times vehemently, then loosing his grasp held her out a little from him to look at her, and patting her on the cheek said, "there my pretty girl, how do you like that, don't you love me?"

Agnes taking advantage of an unguarded moment

twisted herself out of his hands, and retreated to the farther corner of the apartment, saying, —

“ You infamous wretch. How dare you presume on such liberties? A lady who is entirely at your mercy, should be protected rather than insulted.”

“ Well, well,” he replied, “ we wont quarrel now. I’m going to leave you for a few days, and hope to find you better when I return. The old woman will see that you are well taken care of;” then saying, “ now my pretty girls, don’t forget Joaquin, the Robber Chief,” and bowing his adieu he passed out at the door, which he closed and locked after him.

The night passed in peace and quiet; the old woman, wrapped in her blanket, stretched herself out on a settee in the room, at the earnest request of the two ladies, and was soon sleeping soundly. Mrs. Alling and her friend, fatigued and overcome by the strange events of the day could not long resist the influence of slumber, and notwithstanding their sorrow, and fear, the uncertainty as to the fate of their husbands, the insults and privation to which they were subjected in this dismal retreat, in the heart of the wild mountains, far from the habitation of man, and prisoners, hoping against hope, yet tired nature must yield, and they slept soundly.

For several days they were unmolested, and saw no one except the old woman, who was rather an agreeable companion. The stay of the robber Chief-tain was unexpectedly prolonged. Three weeks passed, still he came not, nor did anything happen to break the quiet stillness of the robber's retreat. The day had been unusually gloomy, the old woman had interested her charge with pleasant stories of her youth, and early memories of her childhood's home, painted in glowing colors the sunny hours of her first married life, contrasting it with later days, what she had been, and what she then was. Lost to society, to herself, and all her friends, they listened attentively to the recital of the strange story of her eventful life; but Mrs. Alling did not wish to take a retrospect of the past, but rather to try by her creative powers to devise some means by which she might escape from that dismal place, and infamy or death one of which seemed inevitable. The conversation was interrupted by the sound of voices in the outer room, and the next instant the door burst open and two burly fellows, half intoxicated, staggered into the apartment.

" Halloa, halloa ! old woman, is it a tay party ye have here ? Be the powers and it's a mighty fine sen-

orita ye have there," pointing to Agnes, " and be the howly St. Patrick, what would ye call the likes o' that weazen-faced, lily-livered, spalpeen in the corner there? Come, my old gal, get up and show fight, not be settled down there like a hill o' potatoes after a hard rain!" and grasping Mrs. Farr by the arm, he threw her half-way across the room.

Mrs. Alling saw at a glance that the ruffian before her was no less a personage than Three-fingered Jack, — this title being conferred upon him, on the occasion of his losing three fingers of his right hand in a severe contest, notwithstanding which he came off victorious, and it required but a momentary glance to ascertain that his companion, and the man who accompanied Joaquin on the day of their capture, and who bore off the fainting form of Mrs. Farr, were one and the same person, the veritable Mike. On seeing the rude manner in which her friend was handled, Mrs. Alling arose and confronted him, with, "Contemptible villain! Is that all the respect you have for an innocent woman! What can you expect would be the fate of your own wife and daughters if you show no mercy to others? You infamous, brutal wretch!"

"Come, come now," said Jack, with a fiendish

grin. "Don't call me all thim purty names, you're the gal for me, jist the gal I want, and be the jumping Jerry I must have a good squeeze now, jist by the way of introduction, and so I will," at the same time passing his arm around her waist. Thinking her time had come, she gave a terrible scream, and Mrs. Farr, who had retreated to her hiding-place in the corner, buried her face in her hands, scarcely daring to breathe.

The old woman and Mike came to the rescue, the former with entreaties and threats of informing against him to the robber Chieftain, which seemed to remind him that he was encroaching on forbidden ground. The persuasive powers of Mike were brought into requisition with all the eloquence he could command, and Three-fingered Jack was escorted from the apartment by Mike, followed by the old woman who took good care to securely fasten the door behind her. In the large room before mentioned, Mike joined with his half inebriated companion in the indulgence of sundry and divers drinks, which soon put a quietus upon all operations by Three-fingered Jack. For three days he lay in a state of stupefaction from the effects of certain liquors administered by Mike in a friendly, and

sociable way, until it was thought no longer practicable to administer the drug. He was allowed to recover from his stupor, the past being entirely obliterated from his mind leaving no recollection of having seen any new faces in the retreat. Mike having received the injunctions of his Chief to keep the fact of the presence of the new captives a secret from all the gang, and especially Three-fingered Jack, had been so far unmindful of his duty as to allow the vilest demon of the den to enter the Chieftain's apartment, and by so doing, to come in possession of facts which Joaquin wished by all means to conceal from him. Something must now be done. Three-fingered Jack, an Irishman by birth, of low order, naturally malicious and revengeful, now having for years been associated with Spanish, and Indians, contaminated with the effects of his occupation, became one of the most malicious, blood-thirsty ruffians that ever breathed the air of heaven, and with one or two exceptions, the only one of the band from whose heart every particle of honor had forever fled. It was only when his hands were dripping with blood that he seemed happy, and often against all remonstrance would dash out the brains of his victim without the slightest provocation, and was often admonished by

the Bandit Chief, and reproved for his wanton cruelty, who never took the life of a female under any circumstances. Three-fingered Jack was hated as well as feared, by all the band, and now Mike set himself about devising a plan to get him out of the way, at least until his master's return, which was daily expected. Accordingly he related to him in detail a story which purported to come from one of the band confidentially, that one of the wealthy gentlemen of California had passed up through the mountains, on his way to the mines, and would probably return alone in a few days, with an immense amount of dust, besides as it was near steamer day, the express would be coming down with gold for the Eastern States, and that several of the band not wishing him to accompany them had slipped off quietly en route for the highway where they would lie in wait for their booty.

“ By the howly mother of Moses,” said Jack, “ and is it meself they are not wanting along, hey? Be the powers, I'll jist show them a bit of a trick. I'll jist go a notch higher up on the road, and take me birds as they come down, before they fly into their trap,” saying which he went out, and left Mike to congratulate himself upon the success of his plans, and the fertility of his imagination.

Three more long, dreary weeks passed, and Joaquin returned, but now pale and careworn, evidently caused by some unusual danger, or a terrible struggle going on within. He entered the retreat, booted and spurred, covered with dust and sweat, and appeared scarcely to notice his prisoners, but speaking a few hurried words in a low tone to the old woman, passed into the inner room where he divested himself of his equipments, made a hasty toilet, and threw himself down for a few moments' rest. That night as many of the band as were within easy call were summoned together. They assembled to the number of about eighty, and seated themselves around the long table in the banqueting-hall. When all was arranged the Bandit Chief walked slowly in, and took his accustomed place at the head of the table. The room was brilliantly lighted, and the table well supplied with choice wines and cigars. Each one recounted his deeds of daring, and commented on his various hairbreadth escapes, and the value of the booty he had taken.

After the business of the council was over, Joaquin arose and delivered a short address, in which he told them that it had been his intention for some time past to give up his present pursuits, and retire to

private life ; that his revengeful spirit was satisfied, and as for gold, he had plenty. That at first he was actuated by thirst for revenge, which had been satiated with blood, and now he had no inducements to commit further depredations, but chose rather to retire from the field of action ; that his wife had been very ill, and for a time her life was despaired of ; that she mourned much for him in his absence, and that he must soon leave them.

A look of sorrow spread over the faces of the robbers as they thought that their beloved Chief who had led them through many dangers, had been their counsellor and support under trials of various kinds, was now about to dissolve his connection with them, and leave them a broken and scattered band ; prayers and entreaties arose from all quarters of the room, which soon overcame the generous heart of the Bandit Chief, and he yielded to their earnest solicitations to remain with them one year longer ; at this announcement, loud shouts rent the air, and cries of “ Long live Joaquin ” arose in all directions. Toasts were drank in great profusion,

“ And all went merry as a marriage bell.”

until at length the robber Chieftain becoming hilari-

ous with too much wine, ordered that his prisoners be brought in to contribute to the amusement of his guests, accordingly Mike was despatched to do the honors of the escort. Whatever of good or evil awaited them they knew not, but Mrs. Alling consoled herself with the thought that thus far she had escaped serious injury, and firmly believing that in this trying hour she should also be protected, she obeyed the summons with steady footsteps, and a look of firmness and contempt upon her countenance. Her companion followed closely, pale and trembling, and the old woman determined to see what was to be done, brought up the rear. The Bandit Chief arose as they entered, and taking Mrs. Alling by the hand, presented her to the company, saying —

“ My friends and followers, here is the finest specimen of a pretty young lady you ever saw. No simpering about her, she is true grit. Drink her health in overflowing goblets.”

At this moment a young man at the farther end of the table arose, and walked slowly towards her until sufficiently near to make sure of her identity, then springing suddenly forward caught her by both hands, exclaiming —

“My dear, dear Mrs. Alling! My long-lost Agnes! Is it really you or am I dreaming? If so it is an ecstatic dream.” Only one glance was needed to reveal to her in the person before her, although in disguise, the face and form of her persevering and heart-broken lover, J. P. Smith, who after a few moments was allowed to depart with the ladies to the inner room, where they entered into a full explanation of what had taken place since they parted at Peter Job’s, four years before. Our readers also may wish to know how the educated and refined gentleman, the man of taste and cultivation, could become associated, or enter into partnership in any way with this notorious band of robbers. For the benefit of those who have never explored the mountain regions of California, we would say that there were many men of good standing and fine principles, trading through the mining towns, whose business called them frequently to pass through the localities infested by these robbers, and who found it necessary for their own safety and that of their property to identify themselves with them, and in many cases if we may so speak, become honorary members of that band, only being present two or three times a year at their councils, but never joining in any of their murderous

deeds, or sharing in their plunder, and scarcely knowing anything of their movements, except as they read in the papers of some one being robbed and murdered, or overtaking a stray horse on the mountain road saddled, bridled, and riderless. Such was the case of the gentleman in question ; having lost all at a fire in Nevada City, he determined to retrieve his fortune by trading through the mines, buying gold, and would often pass through the mountains from one town to another with large quantities of dust, but had no feeling in common with the robbers or any interest in them whatever, except the hope that they might be brought to justice. He recoiled at the sight of blood, and his ears were too sensitive to listen to their tales of cruelty told over their wine, and he went as little among them as possible. A long time had passed since he had met with them in council, and the band which had been doing nothing comparatively for some months, now had started up anew, and more ferocious than ever. Scarcely a day passed without new evidences of their presence on the highway, and Mr. Smith, lest some might forget him, and he share the fate of others ere he could make himself known to them, came again to the

council, where to his astonishment he found his old friend of former years.

Two or three days subsequently, Mrs. Alling and her lady friend, accompanied by Mr. Smith, took a final leave of the Bandit Chief, bade an affectionate farewell to the old woman, who had been their only companion for six long, dreary weeks, and left the retreat. The Chief imperatively demanded that the two ladies should be blindfolded the same as before, until they gained a point in the highway from whence it would be impossible to give information concerning the locality or direction of the retreat, or anything whereby the robbers might be found. They cheerfully submitted, and mounted each on separate horses, the reins being held firmly in the hands of their companion, wended their way slowly through the forest path, over bluffs, and across ravines, until they reached the point designated, when the bandages were removed, and a scene of uncommon beauty met their gaze. The bright sunlight, beautiful flowers, the broad plains, with here and there a clump of old oaks, in the distance, together with the thought that they were free, combined to make that hour one of rapturous delight, though not without alloy, for long and sadly had they thought

of the fate of their unhappy husbands ; and now, as they were again upon the highway, and perhaps passing near the spot, gloomy thoughts pressed heavily upon their minds, and they rode on in silence.

On arriving at Q ranche, they learned that Dr. Farr had been brought there some six weeks previous, mortally wounded ; that he died a few hours after his arrival ; that some friends came from Sacramento and removed his remains to that place for interment, and that Mr. Alling also arrived at the same time, slightly wounded, but so badly stunned as to be insensible for several hours. Large rewards had been offered for the ladies who were captured at the time, and the mountain gorges searched in every direction, but to no purpose, as neither robbers nor captives could be found ; but that one whom they suspected belonged to Joaquin's band, had, a few days since, murdered an old man in his cabin, a short distance from Q ranche. He was hotly pursued, overtaken, and tried by the American citizens in the vicinity, and hung on a tree only a few steps distant ; that he was accompanied by a man whose description Mrs. Alling identified as that of Joaquin, but his fiery steed flew over the road so fast it was

impossible to overtake him, and he made his escape.

Upon inquiry it was ascertained that this event took place upon the day that Joaquin entered the retreat after his long absence, covered with dust, weary, and dejected. They were also informed that Mr. Alling partially recovered from his injuries, and had gone to his home in the valley of Sonoma.

After partaking of refreshments and resting themselves, a few hours, a carriage was procured, and taking fresh horses, they proceeded on toward the "City of the Plains." Arrived in Sacramento, they stopped for a day or two to mourn with Mrs. Farr the untimely fate of her husband. She was inconsolable and refused to be comforted. She accepted an invitation to remain, at least, for the present, with some relatives of her husband, in Sacramento, where we will leave her.

Mr. Smith accompanied Mrs. Alling by boat, to San Francisco, and insisted on seeing her safely to her home in the valley, but fearing another encounter with her husband, she persistently refused, whereupon he declared his intention to remain in San Francisco until he saw her again, saying that if he should hear that her husband treated her no better

than formerly, but continued his abuse, he would steal her and run away to the Sandwich Islands. He took an affectionate leave of her as she embarked on board the boat for the valley of Sonoma, saying,—

“Remember, I shall not leave this city until I know that you are happy.”

On the boat Mrs. Alling was interrogated on every side by those who knew her, as to where she had been, what she had been doing, etc., saying that they had supposed her dead; that they heard she had been taken by the robbers, and never afterwards seen. She declined answering as much as possible, and kept by herself most of the time.

Two or three months in California brings great changes. A fast country, and everything turns rapidly. Consequently, when Mrs. Alling arrived at the little town which was once her home, she hurried along a by street, her face concealed as much as possible, by a thick veil, and gained her dwelling without interruption, when, to her surprise, instead of finding Mr. Alling ready to welcome her, she found the door locked, and a large bill fastened upon it with the words “To Let,” and looking in through the broken window panes, she discovered

that everything was removed and nothing but dirt and rubbish remained.

She spent a few days among her friends in the village, and from them she learned that Mr. Alling had returned in feeble health, dejected and melancholy, that he had taken so much to hard drinking as to be totally unfit for anything ; that he had sold a part and given away the remainder of the goods in the store, collected in some few outstanding debts, and gone to the Eastern States.

After settling such accounts as Mr. Alling had overlooked, and collecting money which was out of his reach, she bade adieu to her friends and the valley of Sonoma and left for San Francisco, en route for the States. Arriving at the great emporium of the Pacific, she found her friend as in former years watching and waiting her arrival by every boat, having heard of Mrs Alling's departure for the East. The intervening days before the sailing of the next steamer were spent in settling with her creditors, visiting friends, and preparing for her journey, and as she was about taking a final leave of the State and all things connected with it, she was anxious to learn what had been the fate of some with whom she had been intimately connected in former

days. She learned from friends in San Francisco, that the beautiful Mrs. St. John with her husband and little daughter were living in peace and happiness in one of the mining towns ; that Mr. St. John was editor and proprietor of a weekly newspaper, was steady, industrious, and doing well. And here for the benefit of our readers who are curious to know what became of Mrs. Lafond, the boarding-mistress, we will relate an incident which threw her entirely out of the pale of respectable society, and branded her with shame.

After Mr. and Mrs. Alling's departure from her house some five years previous, her malicious propensities manifested themselves in various ways still stronger and more apparent, and suspicion often rested upon her with almost crushing weight, but by reason of her power to deceive, her saint-like face, and a few forced tears, together with some few friends who had unwittingly been decoyed into her snare, or were held in abeyance from interested motives, she had managed to ward off suspicion to a considerable extent, and prevent anything glaring coming before the public.

There lived somewhere in the city a woman of very disreputable character, with whom Mrs. Lafond

had been acquainted in former years, perhaps in the days of her innocence, and from whom she continued to receive visits, though after her notorious character became known these visits were made secretly, generally after dark, and were so managed that she saw no one but Mrs. Lafond. She was well known by a certain class of the community, and at the time the following incident took place, was the acknowledged mistress of an eminent lawyer down town. One day towards the end of the rainy season, she called early in the afternoon disguised in a heavy cloak, and thick veil. It was a fitful day, a day of sunshine and showers, reminding one of an April day in the Eastern States, now shining, now raining. Consequently in a short time after the woman entered, it commenced to rain, and presently, Mrs. Lafond looking down the garden path, exclaimed —

“ Why bless me, here comes my minister ! Now you keep still, and do as I tell you, and I'll play off a good joke him.”

The woman of the town assented, and the minister was ushered in, and duly introduced to Mrs. Layton, not forgetting to mention that she was the wife of the eminent lawyer by that name. The reverend divine exchanged salutations with the woman, and declared

himself highly gratified in making her acquaintance. The woman was lady-like and genteel, and when in company which called it forth, could appear the personification of propriety. After a short conversation with the ladies on common-place matters and inquiries after the temporal and spiritual welfare of sister Lafond, the reverend gentleman was about to take his leave, when Mrs. Lafond inquired —

“ Won’t you pray with us before you go? We should be pleased to have you do so,” and the three knelt in prayer.

It was still raining as the woman (Mrs. Layton) rose to depart. Mrs. Lafond glanced at her with a knowing wink, and said —

“ Why you cannot! How can you go in the rain? You have no umbrella; I am sorry I have none for you! I loaned mine this morning to Dr. Taylor, but” — hesitating, and turning towards the gentleman, “ if you must go perhaps brother Bradley will allow you to walk under his umbrella?”

“ Oh, certainly, certainly madam, with the greatest pleasure,” and taking his arm the twain walked down the garden path, passed out of the gate down Clay Street to Montgomery, turned the corner, and walking on a short distance, he left her at the door of her supposed husband’s office.

A short time only elapsed, and the church arose in her might. Charges were brought against the minister of associating and walking arm in arm in the street with a notorious woman of the town. A long and careful examination was held; the gentleman protested his innocence, and his entire ignorance of the woman's character, notwithstanding which some of the scandal-loving ones of the flock persisted in believing him guilty, although he was exonerated by the board of examination, and treated him in so unjust and unbecoming a manner that in a few weeks he closed his connections with the church and sailed for the Eastern States. For this overt act Mrs. Lafond was excommunicated, the evidence produced at the examination being of such a character as to not only forbid all fellowship with Christians, but forever debar her the society of decent people. From this time forth her course was rapidly downward; what few friends she had left her one by one; the titles to her land, of which she had considerable, proved worthless, except her homestead which was now her all, and on which as time wore on, mortgage after mortgage was given until at the end of three years a very small portion only remained to her. She was shunned and avoided by every one as an infectious

and polluted thing, and all both male and female scorned to take her impious name upon their lips. Even grocery dealers and others refused to send home their wares, saying they would rather not sell than be seen going there, and another year found her cooped up in the back basement of the beautiful house which had once been her own, a melancholy, dejected lunatic, at times fancying herself this and that person, and refusing to answer to her own name ; at other times she acknowledged herself to be Mrs. Lafond, and related with a great deal of pomp some of her notorious deeds of darkness, and indulged in a wild, demonical laugh which proved that reason was dethroned.

Steamer day arrived, and Mrs. Alling, amid smiles and tears, bade adieu to the great Eldorado of the Pacific. Mr. Smith on whom she now looked as one of her best and dearest friends, took an affectionate leave of her with many a hearty "God bless you," and strict injunctions to write often from the "other side" with many wishes for her welfare and speedy return to the Eureka State. On arriving at New York, she learned that Mr. Alling had a few weeks previously left for his home in the South, whither she immediately despatched a letter, and

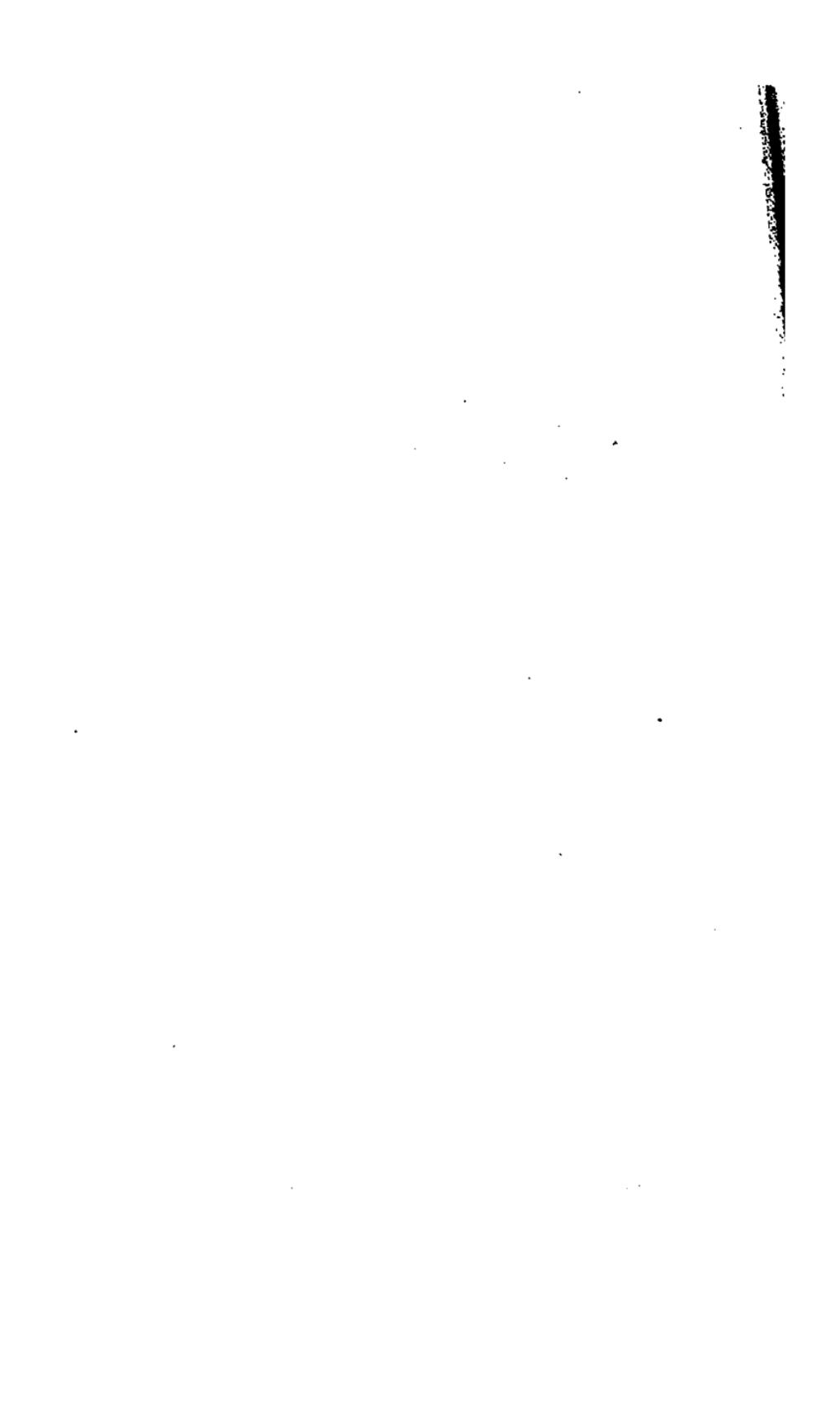
received in reply that he was there, but very low with a fever, and a few days after came the intelligence of his death; but the letter having been delayed for some days along the route, and other things not being equal to the emergency, it was deemed impracticable for her to proceed to that point. But she took means to ascertain what property he had, and how it had been disposed of, and received information by letter from reliable sources that he had not at that time, and never had any property of any kind whatever. That he had been engaged in some kind of speculation, that up to the time of his leaving them, some six years before, he had been considered strictly honest; that about that time he had been entrusted by different parties with a large amount of funds with which to purchase stock in New York and Philadelphia, which instead of doing, he had appropriated to his own use, and disgraced himself in the eyes of all who knew him.

“Liberty is sweet,” said Agnes, as she left for her mother’s home in the valley of the Connecticut.

THE END.







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